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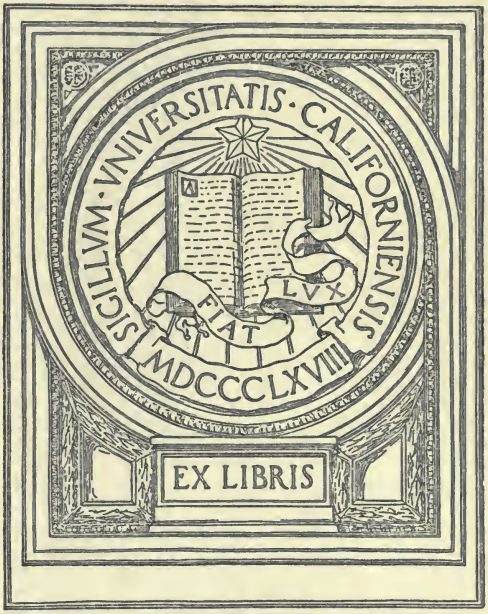
Cam Clarke

By John H. Walsh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CAM CLARKE

BY

JOHN H. WALSH

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CAM CLARKE

CHAPTER I

AS I start writing, I mean this to be the history of a year of Cam Clarke's life. But I suppose when I have finished it will be something else. In the first place, I am so egotistical and so charmed with myself that there is likely to be too much about me in it and too little about Cam; and perhaps I shall fatuously write too much about Sarah Clarke or about the town of Washtucna * itself, for I love them both. Who knows? But I mean to be honest with Cam. I mean to tell many things about him, for he is the most important person of us all. I know this, and the world knows it much better than I do. But I do not really believe it in my heart. In my heart I'm convinced that my own affairs are more important. You see how I shall be torn and warped as I go along.

The difficulty of proportioning things will be greater because I really want to say a great deal about Sarah Clarke, Dock Punts, John Bradford and Washtucna in general. These are the background on which Cam and I are to appear. I have studied this question carefully. Such backgrounds are called by the writers " local colour." But how a

* The village Washtucna of this narrative is not to be confused with the Washtucna of actual geography.— *The Author.*

reader can tell " local colour " from the real stuff of the book I do not see, unless the author gives directions: which I here do. The book is about Cam Clarke and me. We are the stars. I am assigning the parts, so I take a good one myself. We, I say, are the stars and if there is a villain it is either Whitey McGrath or else Father Time who is making every one of us older.

Cam Clarke and Washtucna and I made our appearance in eastern Washington at different times. Washtucna, as I have implied, is a town, and any horses, dogs or babies with that name came by it dishonestly and latterly. The town was there before me but it did not have much of a start when I arrived with my people. It was just a stage station on the Colfax-Spokane line. The stages always changed horses there and the various drivers always took a drink at Jan Havland's spirit emporium. Then there were six or nine ranchers who rode in every week and asked for mail at the post-office kept by the all-round merchant, Mr. Donnelly. They scarcely ever got mail, but they always asked for it.

My family, which was large, ignorant and wild, came across the plains by wagon, although the Northern Pacific Railroad had been finished for some time. They came by wagon in the deluded idea that wagon-travel was cheaper than train-travel. And, indeed, my poor, irascible, ill-instructed father held that belief up to the time of his death; and he so valiantly supported it with the artillery of his wrath and abuse that no one latterly ever dared discuss it with him. Inasmuch as the subject was dead, so far as he was concerned, this was no loss. And

perhaps he did come the cheapest way: his time was worth about nothing. We *lived,* and that was all we ever did, no matter where we were.

There were some thousands of other people who came West the same way at the same late day, but I doubt if many were as poorly equipped or as ignorant of conditions and methods as we. I hope none were. We were a large family of small children, my mother was delicate, we were short of money, our live stock was poor, even when we started, and my father was not a plainsman. He was not even a practical farmer or horseman but a cobbler and, in strict honesty, I confess, he was not a very good cobbler. But he was spirited and determined and stubborn and healthy and he was not afraid even of his youngest daughter — that is, not so much afraid as some fathers.

We started from Dubuque, Iowa, early in spring. I do not remember much of the trip, just spots here and there: a wild thunder storm on the prairie at night, father staggering back to camp drunk from the saloons of some frontier town and his children running out to tantalise him as *picadores* tantalise a bull. We were not very much afraid of the poor man even when he was drunk and we were not shocked at all, for we had too often seen him in that condition before. At some stage of the transaction my mother, who was a stooped, slender woman, would turn away from the whole wild lot of us, husband and children, with so desolate a face that we would desist.

My father when sober was a strange, shrivelled, ignorant but kindly and bright-eyed little Irishman,

always hopeful and in good courage. In drink he used at one time to be very hilarious, but later he became irascible and violent and as he grew older he became worse — but all that is gone; let the bones of his sins lie at rest forever.

As I have said, he knew nothing of plainscraft or woodscraft or horsemanship and it was only God's mercy that brought us safely through. And, indeed, my mother did not finish the long journey. She lies buried at the foot of one of those strange, flat-topped mountains in Montana at the edge of a wide and lonely prairie. I tried to find the spot all of last summer but her death happened too long ago. I could not locate the place and so the grave is unmarked and her children do not know within ten miles where she lies. Of her my remembrance is like that of the journey, it comes just in fleeting glimpses. She had hair as black as a crow's wing and blue eyes, she was stooped and slender. I know almost no more from my memory, but from her works I doubt not that she was an admirable woman. However, the burden of mothering a round dozen of children, who were growing up as wild as hawks, and the hardships of the long journey across the great shimmering plains were too much for her. We stayed in camp three days and she died. I remember my sister's wails and I remember the smell of the fresh turned earth of the grave and then we were travelling again. The plains seemed interminable.

After my mother's death we received considerably less than no care and that we lived is a fact highly creditable to the vitality of the whole human race. Under the circumstances there was naturally but

little cohesion in the family. We seemed as ready to leave the nest of home as young eagles and my father's habit of smothering his sorrows, doubts and all other perturbations in whisky and of afterwards showing violent temper did not materially aid in holding us together. But we did not immediately break up. You may mutiny in mid-ocean but you cannot desert unless you go overboard. We continued, hit or miss, over the wide, open spaces of Montana, and, because of the weakness of our stock, dropped behind one wagon train after another. But we never abandoned the voyage: my father's perseverance was as admirable as his efficiency was execrable. We made a slow journey but at length we entered the forests of pine, somber-coloured, but with air that sparkled like bubbling wine. It is a long journey, however, to the Palouse Country even after you reach the mountains and we seemed to travel forever over the almost impassable mountain roads.

Late in the autumn we came down to Spokane across the gravelly prairie to the north. Spokane was then a frontier town where a few hundreds of people lived in frame houses, tents and log cabins, which lay loosely along the banks of a clear river. Behind and beyond the town in every direction were irregular small mountains straggling up to the sky. These carried a sparse and dwarfed growth of black foliaged pine while the rest of earth was in the " sear and yellow leaf," brown, red and yellow with the long drought of summer and autumn still upon it.

Spokane was lighted to the due pitch for the rude and riotous dissipations of a race nearly descended from the loud-laughing, deep-drinking, sea-faring

peoples of all North Europe: Saxon and Finn and Dane and Celt. Their rejoicings never ceased. And I liked nothing better than peering into the forbidden regions of the great tent saloons, wherefrom one heard constantly the clink of glass and poker-chip, the hilarious wailings of fiddles and a dull stamping and shuffling of feet. Frequently loud oaths were roared out by uncouth, hairy men and less frequently one heard revolver shots. Spokane was still in her buckskin clothes, as it were — or rather she was at that time changing her shirt.

Other activities were amove. The railroad was newly arrived and already through the laughter of the spenders from the wilderness there sounded the hammers of industry, the sob and sigh of steam, the lazy snore of spinning saws. Though I little understood, this country was preparing for a new era. A new breed of human animal was sweeping down upon it, a race of farmers and merchants and drunkards, a race training up sisters of charity and prostitutes, honest mothers of children, bankers and preachers.

Above all and through all was threaded the roar of the great cataracts. When I now see this cataract as it is, my memory hears it as it then was when it was new to me: vast, impressive and mysterious. Yet I see now that it is not so large as I had fancied. It is like the height of the school-house stairs and the distance to the spring wherefrom we drew our water, it has seemed to shrink year by year.

We stayed but a few days in Spokane, yet I contrived to make myself extraordinarily well acquainted. No less a person than the Chief of

Police learned to call me by name and I was so impressed by the majesty of his position that I all unconsciously lied about his stature, strength and valour for twenty years. When I saw him again I was astonished. I found he was full six inches shorter than I had fancied and that he was afraid of his wife. Of such stuff are heroes made! Time also had been busy branding him. Indeed, his brand is upon us all; he leaves no mavericks.

We left Spokane because some street acquaintance of my father's told him the Palouse Country was a good place for a shoemaker, as there were none there. This was doubtful argument, the same could be said of the poles of the earth. He also assured my father that a new railroad would enter the Palouse Country in early spring. That was sufficient. We again got our worn horses under way for one more stage of travel. Fortunately it was not a long journey to the Palouse. At that time, if he had heard of Kamchatka, my father would have started for it. Go, go, obsessed him; he must go.

This proved the end of his travels. The restless desire to move which had driven him from Ireland to a new continent and finally to almost the far fringes of that continent seemed suddenly quieted in the Palouse Country. I never thereafter heard him express a desire to change his habitation again. He attributed this quieting influence to the charms of the Palouse Country; I attributed it to exhaustion.

What an impressive, colossal movement this westward flow of population has been! Almost the whole Caucasian race has joined in it. Is it strange that

those crowded, thinly fed people beyond even the Pacific ask themselves how far we shall go, and arm themselves? We are Attila, the Hun, a hundred times magnified; we conquer not only men but the soil. Oh, we have made ourselves heirs to continents. God help us to till the continents and to till ourselves that they and we may vibrate harmoniously together under His hand like gut under the bow of the violinist!

It was a bleak November evening that brought us to the four houses in a row which comprised the stage station Washtucna. These houses were Jan Havland's saloon, the Tennessee Restaurant and Hotel, Billy Carroll's livery stable and squint-eyed John Donnelly's general store. Old Jimmy Day's ranch was a half mile away across the flat while Judge Rusher's was a mile south and Mr. Beauclerc's a mile north. We were on flat ground with rolling bunch grass country all around us. We made camp, intending to push on further next morning, but one of our tottering bone-racks of horses died in the night and, as we had no money to buy another and were not resourceful enough to steal, we perforce had to stay in Washtucna. My father was unexpectedly complacent. " 'Tis the voice of God," said he reverently that morning at breakfast, as we children shivered around the camp fire in a drizzling rain, eating sourdough bread and small portions of bacon and tea. Then he crossed himself piously. After breakfast he strolled over to Jan Havland's bar and by the generosity of more affluent customers he was soon made sociably drunk. Washtucna was helpful in those days, she would help you get any

thing you wanted. My father's financial embarrassments were no sooner mentioned by him than plans were set afoot to relieve them.

"Campin," said Jimmy Day heartily, pulling his beard, which looked like a whisk broom, being soiled white and spreading, "I want a shoemaker on my ranch, so I do; now you go right across the road there — this is all my land — and pick out a promising place and build a shack and I'll give you an acre of ground."

I need not remark that this was before Washtucna commenced to indulge in the fancy that she was an embryo metropolis.

"I'll pay for't in worruk," said my father, who had when tipsy an even stronger feeling of pride in financial matters than when sober.

"I like seein' lots o' children aroun'," added Mr. Jimmy Day, by way of additional explanation, "an' you do seem to sure have quite a snag of 'em."

"'Tis but a shmall famil-ly," said my father, "only twilve."

"What's *your* name?" asked Mr. Jimmy, pulling my ear in a friendly way.

"Mart, sir."

"An' your brothers and sisters?"

In answer I recited rapidly the line composed by my brother Tim as a roster list — not, however, that we ever were mustered. I may mention that in spite of my brother Tim's early promise he did not turn out to be a poet.

"Tommie, Mary, Larrie,
Bridget, Ann, Carrie,

Martin, Peter, Tim,
Kate, Maggie, Jim."

Of these, Mary, the oldest, was a thin-faced, kindly, gentle girl with a hacking cough and a nimble wit and tongue. She was now the mother of the family. I thought her very beautiful in those days, but she is long since dead. Oh, the pity of it! It is like physical pain to me to remember that inexorable, significant cough. Next was Tim, next Bridget, then I and the rest were strung out in decreased age down to baby Maggie, who then sprawled over everybody and everything, but who later grew up to marry the man who owns the Quickstep mine. And an admirable husband he is, barring a weakness for the sex which might be anticipated in a bonanza king.

My father very wisely took Mr. Jimmy Day's advice and we contrived to throw together a three-room shack from scraps of logs, poles, boxes, burlap, canvas, kerosene cans and straw. It was a miserable shelter, it leaked and of course it was cold, but we considered that it did very well, as none of us died that winter. It seems to me now that we were something less than half fed, but we lived through that, too; and generally we were merry and happy enough even in the presence of Mary's cough, of which none of us then understood the significance, not even she.

One of my father's first acts after finishing the shack was to hang out his shoemaker's sign, a battered, ill-favoured, small wooden boot, which he had packed with him all the way from Waterford, Ireland. He hung it right by the flapping piece of board which we called the door. At first he was sur-

prised that it brought no business and in a fit of extravagance he painted it. But that did no good and it gradually was borne in, not upon his mind, for he, properly speaking, had none, but upon his consciousness that there were only about fifty pairs of feet in any way tributary to Washtucna and that some of those feet wore moccasins. The cobbler's business being temporarily poor, my father took jobs helping the other four men in town do things that they did not need to have done at all. In the meantime my brother Tim and I trapped muskrats which old Mr. Donnelly bought for twice their value. And by all these devices the whole family of us kept alive.

But it was a hard winter. During how many nights did we shiver with cold under insufficient blankets! And we were never so free from hunger that we could not have eaten more. At first my father, to dull the sense of his sorrows and hardships, would from time to time buy as much of Jan Havland's rum as he could pay for, drink it and then come home and beat, " for God's sake," as he used to say, such of his children as were unwary enough to be caught. This was a game between him and us. But Jan Havland himself checked that: he refused to sell liquor to him. As for the beatings, that was a square game and one which we enjoyed as much as he did. We teased and tantalised him and he beat us when he caught us, without leaving lasting hard feeling on either side. Sometimes, however, Mary would cry and that would break up the sport.

Spring that year seemed heart breakingly joyful, and my oldest brother, Tim, was so intoxicated with

its warmth and fragrances that he ran off. He never returned, but I have heard within the last year that he is in Australia and is prospering there. For many years we had not known even that he was still alive. Oh, we were, I say, like young hawks. We were bred to run away and poverty made the running easier yet. As soon as we could we spilled ourselves out of the nest, and thereafter we went hunting on our own account.

Washtucna started to grow as soon as the snow was melted by the warm breath of the first March Chinook wind. But it was not until the Clarkes arrived that Washtucna became a real town with a spirit of its own. Mrs. Clarke gave the town its spirit. It was in the *spirited* Washtucna that Cam Clarke lived, and it is of that Washtucna that I desire to tell. But it is difficult not to talk of oneself so much as to eclipse Cam, Washtucna and everything else.

Washtucna was only a small group of houses until the Clarkes came and there were few who fancied that it would ever be a large group. But even then it showed very clearly the cleavages and tendencies and traits which would characterise its more prosperous days. It was a hospitable, generous, hilarious, rancorous, exuberant, kindly community, and already the few scattered inhabitants of the district had divided themselves into two hostile factions called Saints and Sinners. These names were adopted more for purposes of distinction than because they correctly described the habits or conduct of the persons concerned. Judge Rusher, short, fat, red faced, with a tawny beard, was leader of the

Sinner party; while Mr. Beauclerc, who was lank, gaunt, smooth faced and cold eyed, was the "boss" of the Saints. Within each party the other, in the confidence of private talk, was referred to as an aggregation of cattle-thieves, horse-thieves, liars and murderers. Further, the quality and legality of the birth and breeding of the opposing factions was frequently animadverted upon.

Both Saints and Sinners, on account of the precarious grip of human nature upon virtue, were partly right in their accusations. Besides, lawlessness had been fashionable in some respects and neither party had in their hearts desired to be less lawless than their competitors. Which is to say, that in the recognised forms of lawlessness such as branding stray calves and colts the rival parties were in competition. "If people intended regularly to 'slick-ear' your stock, you naturally would board the 'slick-ear' train yourself and heat your own frying-pan," said Punts, M.D., once later in explanation. But in the feeling between Saints and Sinners there was an extraordinary bitterness not warranted by the exigencies of business or competition. Such bitterness is as inexplicable as people's religion or fashions; it is a matter of sentiment, a point of honour: and it is contagious. Newcomers took sides according as the personalities of the contending parties appealed to them, or, in rare cases, they remained neutral, and they made their feelings strong. My father promptly became a Saint, and thereafter he was a solid and certain Saint just as he was a Catholic and a Democrat. He became a Saint because Jimmy Day recommended it, and I suppose he had

like reasons for being a Catholic and a Democrat. And so have I — and so have you, also.

Washtucna, I should explain, lay in a little level-floored valley in the heart of the " Palouse Country," which is in the eastern part of Washington State. The Palouse Country is called in the newspaper vernacular of the Northwest " The Inland Empire," or, more familiarly, " The Palouse." It is a rolling, rich-soiled, prairie plateau, well watered and with timber not more, at most, than fifteen miles distant, which is close for people from prairie States. To the south is the Walla Walla Country, to the west the Big Bend Country, to the north the Spokane Country, to the east Idaho. How those words roll on my ear! Is there not freedom in their sound and great distances?

In the beginning the Palouse Country was for deer, jack rabbits and coyotes, then for a moment for stock-men; but other ranchers followed very closely and took it for wheat; and now gardeners and orchardists are following the wheat farmer. At every phase it has blossomed luxuriantly and the phases have been rapidly run. The journey from wilderness to truck farming has been passed through so quickly that men still young saw it commence. To have lived there constantly is to have learned three or four separate trades. To be what you were thirty years ago is to starve.

The wild Palouse Country was very lovely with its miles on miles of shimmering bunch grass starred in spring with the wild rose, the pigeon-bill, rock lilies and a thousand other varieties of wild flowers. Later it was a solid wheat field from end to end,

green or black or golden yellow, depending on the season; but dotted with lonely, sun-beaten ranch houses. Now it becomes lovely in a different way. Hand-planted trees have grown up around the houses; there are gardens and lawns and lastly school houses, which spill forth children in overflowing measure. But the greatest charm still is the air: it sparkles and glitters; it is mountain air. And the greatest curse is the dust.

CHAPTER II

I SUPPOSE that at one time I knew Cam Clarke as well as did any one in the world; better even than his mother knew him, for she was of a different generation, and difference of age is an insuperable barrier. But that was a long time ago. People remembering the Cam Clarke they knew yesterday — polished, reticent, immaculate, inexorable — may wonder that he should have been so intimate with the ragged son of a crazy Irish cobbler, even in boyhood. But such people only knew the outside of Cam's life. Even in his later career Cam has known a great variety of people. That Cam and I should have been such friends is not surprising at all. You had no real reason to be surprised at anything Cam did.

I would not, however, be understood to apologise for Cam's low associates any more than I would for my poor father's lack of common sense. My father in later days had plenty of things to unbalance his sense: twelve children about like me, and no privileges except those of working day and night, getting drunk once a month or oftener, and beating his children when he could catch them. That was not often, as God had mercifully made them fleet of foot and exceedingly active and resolute — it occurs to me just now that his children's agility may have seemed oppressive to my father as it spoiled his

sport, which proves that every board has two sides. And Cam's possible associates in Washtucna were not much more numerous than my father's privileges. If Cam decided to select me from amongst them it was because, for his purposes, he thought I was the best of the lot; and as I would take his opinion on any subject I take it on that. I suited him.

Cam and his mother and father came down into the Palouse Country in the spring, just ahead of the railroad. We had been there for six months, living off nothing but the hopes of the railroad, when the Clarkes arrived. And the way I lived had made me as lean as a hound, as hard as a sledge dog, and wild. "None of them Campin kids come within gunshot," said Skookum Jones once afterwards to Mrs. Clarke; "they're sure a scary bunch o' colts."

Cam's father navigated down a team of awesomely bare-ribbed mules, which he had purchased in Spokane from a Missouri trader who had no conscience. I do not reprehend that horse-trader; he was just built for his business. He had no more need of conscience than an adding machine has of sense. It functions better without sense. Those mules, however, were as vicious as they were bare-ribbed, and the only reason Cam's father was not killed by them was that he would not wait; he died of another cause before they got around to him. Mr. Clarke appears to have landed in the Palouse Country in about the same financial condition as ourselves. But there were these differences: he had possessed enough money to get there; we had not, but we got there anyway. He realised he was

broke, we did not: we were used to it. You might as well try to show a Chinese coolie the simple life as to introduce us to poverty; we knew it so well that we did not believe there was such a thing. Both he and we, however, were hopeful; extravagantly, hopelessly hopeful.

Cam's father appears to have been about as practical and practicable as my own. But he was quite different. He was highly educated, highly intelligent, well-bred, gentle and generous, but in delicate physical health, and probably with a mind incapable of dealing with the rougher details of life's business, such as currying mules or bossing other mule curriers. Which is to say, he was not, first of all, a good provider of food and raiment. Then he had such altruistic and humane ideas that any modern orthodox Christian would denounce him as a fool. For example, Cam once told me that the reason his father bought those piratical Missouri mules was that he was so sorry to see their ribs stuck out like his own that he wanted to give himself the pleasure of fattening them up. No doubt he knew what he wanted; but for me, I shall make some different disposition of my last dollar. I said "I guessed" that if Mr. Clarke had seen me or my sister Mary when he saw the mules he would have bought us instead, as we had any mule I ever saw "backed off the board for skinniness."

Mr. Clarke must have been a poor mule driver, as he could not swear or wield a blacksnake. Nevertheless, he did somehow herd his way down into the Palouse Country; the mules, of course, travelling at their own convenience, running away or balking,

as suited their fancy. Cam has told me about it so often and I have myself been so often over the same road, that I feel as if I knew all about it. It was early in May when they started from Spokane; the rolling hills were shimmering green with bunchgrass, the meadows were yellow with buttercups and there were little shy violets which shone like the stars. They heard the songs of the meadow larks and the calls of the bold ground squirrel, "which were cheerful and nice sounds," said Cam, "but the wind used to come whistling and whimpering across the prairies in the saddest way a feller could think of, so that you daren't pay any attention to it. Also at night you just couldn't bear to hear the frogs croak in the creek bottoms because it sure did sound as though they felt rotten, and if you listened you would almost die of lonesomeness. But you had to hear them, whether you could bear it or not."

Cam and his father and mother, nevertheless, kept very cheerful. They rode together on the wide front seat of their groaning, rattle-trap, immigrant wagon, which had long before crossed the great plains, and at every chuckhole Cam's father would make one of those two-pronged jokes which Cam himself learned so well how to use later in life. One prong made you laugh and the other made you want to cry for the pity of something. Then, in the worst chuckholes, Mr. Clarke, who was a small, delicate-looking man with a stubby, brown moustache and large, lustrous eyes, would be jolted into frightful paroxysms of coughing from which he would come forth pale and faint, and with blood and another of his two-pronged jokes on his

lips. His management of the mules, as I have said, was only partial; they were in general masters of their own fates; at times they refused to come near the wagon tongue, at other times they refused to pull, at times they even refused to be unharnessed. Mr. Clarke on such occasions just waited and said he was in no hurry. Now a man who can outwait a mule is good; but naturally Mr. Clarke's progress was slow; so slow that he took seven days to travel the forty miles from Spokane to the elbow bend in Pine Creek.

And thus it was that the Clarkes came gradually down into the rich Palouse Country, which was all verdant with spring, Cam riding between his father and mother on the high seat, his gray, speckled eyes, which in appearance were the very mirror of his mother's, open to everything. They were but poor travellers, incapable of hurrying, and, besides, they did not know exactly where they were going. I have since gone over the ground and from Cam's description I have located their various camps. I judge that those camps were selected principally to humour the caprice of the mules and with but little idea of indulging the comfort or convenience of the Clarkes.

The last camp was on the elbow of Pine Creek where Cam and I used later to fish for suckers and to go swimming with the hogs or in winter to skate. It happened to be a good camp, but that was accidental. They selected it because it was late in the evening when they arrived there and because one of the mules balked. There was grass and water handy, but they had not noticed it. They tried to

hurry in making camp, for they had no lantern, and so they paid but little attention to their surroundings, except to make sure that there was a level place big enough to hold their baggage.

Having at length, after considerable effort, got the mules unhitched and the tent unrolled, they seem to have realised suddenly that there was a small man standing in the twilight in their midst, smoking a pipe. This was old Tom Warren, whose house was on the hill a half mile away. They spoke to him courteously without stopping work; he grunted like a pig, and they, with awakened curiosity, lighted a candle in the still air and looked at him. They saw that he was a little, blue-eyed, sturdy, bearded man with dungaree trousers tucked in his cowhide boots and with a faded blue flannel shirt overlaid with wide suspenders, strong enough for saddle girths. He bore the scrutiny unblinkingly.

Tom Warren's sudden appearance had startled them a little, and they were uneasy and curious about him for some time, as he said almost nothing and as he looked, according to his habit, exceedingly stern, gloomy and ferocious. Of course it was the woman that coaxed him out into the daylight of human sociability. Sarah Clarke got him to talk, and Cam said that when he spoke it was in such a deep voice that all the hills roared back echoes. He pretended that he was bored and wearied with every one alive and he spoke in most lugubrious tones of life and of other lugubrious things. There was something quaint in thus hearing a man who ought to have been lonely traduce the human race. But this was a quick audience.

They laughed at him and with him and all around him. They, every one, seemed to have understood him almost at once and to have ceased immediately to be frightened, and even, said Cam, to have " felt comforted " by his company, lugubrious in quality though it was.

Sarah Clarke politely laughed in the little man's face, which is difficult to do, and then she smiled at him through the twilight and said it was cordial and generous of him to come down so far to cheer up a family of gypsies. The idea that he was a cordial and generous fellow was like wine to Mr. Tom Warren. Such a thought was to him unique. Mr. Clarke looked at him just once, straight in the eye, through the gathering darkness, and saw, so he afterwards said, that the man's ugliness was all external and that his disagreeableness was a cross between habit and self-consciousness.

" Stranger," said he amiably, " I think perhaps you know more about hobbling mules than I do. I'm a lawyer and I could hobble up a piece of property in a deed pretty well, but I'm having a hard time with these mules. The fact is, the animals run off every night and I'm tired of it. They're not my trade, and their trade, I find, has considerable technique."

Old Tom laughed, and Cam said it sounded like pounding a barrel, and, as I have heard him laugh myself, I know it is true. Then he lighted his pipe deliberately and laughed again condescendingly. This laughter was not tactful, but Mr. Clarke was patient.

" Avast, shipmate," said Tom Warren, now in

great good humour. "Avast!" said he, or something seamanlike like that, for he had been a sailor before he was a cattleman and had consequently never learned plain English, but could only speak in the vernacular of one of his trades. "Avast there, partner," said he hoarsely. "I'm able to assure you that you do skin me up on knowledge of law and in ignorance of mules. Belay your efforts a bit — give me the mooring gear! The damn mules is spiled."

With that he took the hobbles and a blacksnake and showed Mr. Clarke how to cross-hobble a mule, and illustrated incidentally the moral power of the blacksnake, which are simple things, and I did not see for years how a man could grow up even in Worcester, Massachusetts, without knowing about them. But Mr. Clarke was totally ignorant of them.

"Where air ye hailin' from?" asked Mr. Warren, that task completed.

"Worcester, Massachusetts."

"She must be a back'ard port," and Mr. Warren laughed again, and the whole party and the echoing, silent hills joined in. Then they cheerily made camp together, all working hard.

Old Tom showed them how to pitch a tent without killing yourself with work and where to put the harness to keep coyotes from eating it, as coyotes had already started to do, and how to make a better bed, and he helped them gather wood and start a fire.

When camp was made old Tom started home, but by diplomacy and importunity they made him

stay. Or perhaps it was the smell of bacon, or because he was lonely and liked their company; at any rate he stayed for a second supper with them, and he ate more than any of them. Tom was a good trencherman.

Afterwards they talked for a long while over the camp fire, the moon came up, the coyotes commenced to howl and the chill of night settled down. All this time Cam said they could hear the mules munching and the hobbles rattling, while Tom Warren told them about rounding the Horn in a sailing ship, about the ships from Hongkong and Shanghai, about the pirates of the Celebes Sea, about the dim, swinging lamps in the forecastle, about cattle stampedes and about how cattle starved in winter on the steppes of Wyoming. Tom said that thirsty cattle could smell water for miles, and he told Cam what a boatswain's bird was, and, indeed, he was altogether very interesting. And then he went strolling home in the moonlight, smoking his pipe and talking over his shoulder, and Cam's father coughed and coughed. But, though Cam was sorry, he could not stay awake. He fell asleep with strange noises in his ears: his father's coughing, the rattle of hobble chains, the howling of coyotes, the croaking of frogs and then just blankness everywhere. Cam thought old Tom left just as he piled himself into bed, but he was not sure. He was sure, though, that it was a fragrant night. I asked him about that when I last saw him and he remembered with certainty and promptness.

CHAPTER III

CAM must have been asleep for a long time, although it had not seemed so to him, when he felt Sarah Cameron (that was his pet name for his mother) pull at his shoulder and shake him. He said that, of course, he first opened his eyes sleepily and he saw that his mother was leaning over him with a lighted candle in her hand. He supposed the mules were tangled up in the harness or something like that. But when he saw her face clearly he became instantly wide awake, for it was excessively pale and it was strained and startled in its expression. He jumped up quickly, feeling sure now that something serious was wrong. Something was, indeed, seriously wrong, and Cam said that in a moment he knew what it was without asking, for his father went off into a terrible paroxysm of coughing. He had been going from one to another all night, Sarah Clarke said, but Cam had heard nothing.

Sarah Clarke hurried away and Cam dressed hastily in the darkness. He tried to think, but a lump gathered in his throat and his teeth chattered from fright of the unknown, and of course he could not think. Mrs. Clarke came back presently and told him he must go as quickly as he could to Mr. Tom Warren's house up on the hill — he could see

it there in the moonlight — and he must bring Mr. Warren down if he would come, telling him that Mr. Clarke was very weak from loss of blood and that they wanted his advice and assistance at once. They did not ask for a doctor; that was impossible.

Cam told me that he was terribly afraid as he started and that he was so trembling with fright and cold that he could scarcely speak. But he said he would go and he started off, running at top speed. Presently a coyote howled, and the noise seemed right on top of him, as coyote howls do even to grown people, so he ran faster and faster over the dew-wet, shining grass. The house seemed a long way off and Cam says his wind was shorter than the journey, but he dared not slow down for the coyotes seemed closer than ever and he could easily distinguish their dark shadows, which looked blacker than a rainy night and which grew and waned and vanished and came out in a way that seemed to him supernatural. So he kept on without wind, never ceasing, in spite of the stitch in his side and the steepness of the hill, running until he was right at the door of Tom Warren's cabin.

At the door Cam paused a moment to regain strength before flinging himself against it, and in that moment he could hear old Tom's snorings through the din of his own heart beats. Then he banged the door with his two fists and feet with all his might, making, he says, a dreadful clangour. The snoring ceased abruptly and Cam says he heard a rumbling and grumbling and cursing inside, then silence; and he started pounding again, for he thought Tom Warren was going to sleep and the

coyotes in that case might come down and eat off his shoes right on Tom Warren's doorstep, just as they had eaten pieces of the harness that lay on James O'Neil Clarke's wagon tongue one night.

Suddenly the door was flung wide open and Cam fell back and lost his breath again. There standing on the step in the bright moonlight was old Tom Warren with a double-barreled shotgun in the hollow of his arm. Old Tom was dishevelled with sleep and he was something less than half dressed, but when Cam's breath came back Tom looked beautiful to him, he was so glad to be away from the danger of coyotes. And yet he immediately remembered his errand and started to blurt it out, but Tom roared in surprise like a bull when he saw who it was and the roar drowned Cam's voice and Cam had to start over.

But in about ten seconds Cam made Tom understand. Old Tom thought a moment. "Sure I'll come," he said hoarsely. He made ready quickly. He slipped into his clothes and he and Cam went trotting back to the tent. The return journey was easier, it was down hill.

All the world looked silvery in the moonlight except the tent, which was gold from the candle-light within. Cam seemed to remember that night very clearly. He could not, indeed, forget it, for long afterwards he used to tell me how he saw the yellow buttercups in the grass and how very brightly the rock lilies shone. The air was sweet and pure and cold. They ran until Cam was out of breath again and once, half exhausted, he fell on a tussock of grass and once Tom stumbled in a badger hole and

went down headlong, then rose, cursing in outlandish seaman's oaths, blasting his boom topping lifts, Cam said, and mentioning other pieces of gear foreign to stock-raising. Cam said this was the most elaborate swearing he had heard up till then, but later he heard my father, who was as skilful at flinging off curses as at drinking smoked whisky.

They went slower at the end and came into the tent very quietly, but breathless. James O'Neil Clarke mustered his strength when he saw them enter and contrived to raise himself up a little and to smile a ghastly smile and make a joke. "I'm afraid I'm disturbing the sleep of the coyotes with my coughing," said he faintly.

But Death's hand was already upon him. He was white with the chill and grip of it. And Cam says that his father must have known what was coming to him. He nevertheless tried to make another joke, but coughing cut it short. "He coughed from his feet up," said Cam. And then another paroxysm seized him and Cam desired to shut his ears to it and to run from the pain and horror of it. Tom Warren put his arm around James Clarke at one side, Sarah Clarke at the other. Mr. Clarke thereupon stopped coughing, but Cam had to look away, for his father's face was withering before his eyes.

When Cam looked again they had laid Mr. Clarke back on his pillow; his eyes were closed, the pallor of death dwelt in his face, but his lips were red with blood.

For a long time nobody spoke, a coyote howled dismally, the hobbles of the mules clanked and

clinked and the teeth of the mules munched the grass greedily.

At length Mr. Clarke opened his eyes again. "I'm sorry to bother you this way, Warren; I regret the trouble, sir," he said faintly. Then he motioned to Sarah Clarke as though he would speak to her; but he closed his eyes and did not speak again, ever.

James O'Neil Clarke was dead.

I never knew him, but Cam has told me of him. He appears to have been gifted in many ways. He died very young — who knows what was there? Not any one now. Cam said they stood a long while listening and waiting, and that the coyotes howled dismally and the hobble chains clinked more slowly, and that when they went out the moon was still shining softly and that the perfumed breath of spring was blowing on things.

They buried him there on Warren's flat and Tom Warren and I keep the marks of the spot clear and clean to this day. Though I never knew him, we know that he was Cameron Clarke's father and that Sarah Clarke once loved him; that is all that is needful to us. For him, life turned to night before it had reached its noon.

CHAPTER IV

I REMEMBER clearly the day on which Cam Clarke and his mother came trailing down the hill into Washtucna. It was a very lovely day in spring, a sparkling, breeze-fanned day. I, at the moment when the Clarkes appeared, was lying with what I now call my stomach stretched out on a piece of Jimmy Day's flat land. I was trying to snare a ground squirrel with a string which I had looped around his hole. I did not anticipate success in that enterprise, but I was waiting patiently for the squirrel's head to be thrust out and I was enjoying myself vastly, for it was sunny and warm there, and the air was as fragrant as in a garden. Cam appeared first, galloping easily along the crest of Sebright's hill on Tom Warren's shining roan mare Nan. He paused at the beginning of the sharper descent and, turning back, waited until a mule team soberly appeared behind him. Then he walked Nan leisurely down the hill and out upon Mr. Jimmy Day's flat, where, as I have before remarked, I was resting upon my stomach.

I at once came out of concealment behind the bush and temporarily gave up resting and the snaring of squirrels. I trotted over towards Cam, and he, seeing me, stopped Nan and waited. I waved my hand and he waved back. This, however, was not entirely

a friendly greeting: we were like two dogs, not quite decided whether to snarl and fight or to wag tails and play. At any rate it showed that we were sociably inclined, for fighting is as highly sociable an occupation as story-telling or laughing. And we were both always sociable, though shy; which statement sounds contradictory but is not.

When I got close I stopped and we both stared at each other somewhat belligerently while the roan mare nibbled the bunchgrass. I decided that I liked Cam's looks. He was thin, red haired, freckled and he had extraordinarily striking eyes, gray and blue mottled. But I would not be too cordial. I wanted him to know how excessively valuable my friendship was.

"Where you goin'?" I asked, taking care not to show interest.

Cam pushed his cap up from over a forehead that was beautifully full at the corners with a bored look such as no other boy ever wore, but at the same time he smiled with his flickering eyes and with his lips and answered very coolly and politely, but, of course, with insolence.

"Washtucna. Live here?" And he looked as though he knew I did live here and was ashamed of it.

I had intended, as I approached him, to jeer at him a little, which is the right way to treat strangers, and I thought perhaps I would dare him to come off his cayuse; but I now decided to wait. This did not appear to be an ordinary boy, you could not tell what he would do. If he was as extraordinary as he looked, perhaps it was as a fighter. I had a streak

of prudence in me; I decided to wait and see. Besides, I liked him, for his personality was as potent and charming in early boyhood as in maturity.

We carried on a friendly conversation about mud turtles and girls and swimming and by that time the mule team was descending the steep part of the hill in a cloud of dust.

I had seen the mare Nan before on mail days and I admired her. "D'ye reckon that mare o' yourn would carry double?" I ventured suggestively.

"You bet; she'll carry quadruple, if I want her to," said Cam convincingly and he stuck out his foot to help me up.

"This here 'quadruple's' a new word on me," said I, climbing up without difficulty and taking a seat behind the saddle. Then I touched a bare toe in Nan's flank just to see what she would do. She went like a streak, and hobblety bobblety we dashed back to the wagon where Cam managed to stop her. This had been fun for me and beautifully exciting, but when I stopped paying attention to holding on and put my hand in my pocket to get something, thinking Nan would stand still, I dropped my guard. Nan jumped about thirty-four feet and landed stiff-legged and I went off like a comet and lit on the ground all spraddled out after a fall of five and two-thirds miles. Nan then bolted with Cam, who still stayed on.

It was a pleasant fall until I struck. I don't think I was made unconscious by the landing but I was so surprised by it that I lay still and did not move. I remember afterwards to have told Cam I was thinking. But I may as well admit now that I was not think-

ing and that the world whirled round and round and that I felt sick where I stow my food. So I lay there with my eyes closed and did not move. I suppose I lay there two or three minutes, for when I opened my eyes again Cam Clarke and Sarah Clarke and old Tom were all stooping over me and feeling of me to see where I was broken and Tom was consigning jibbooms to hell in the most reckless manner for a country scarce of firewood. He seemed to have forgotten Mrs. Clarke was present. I was afraid of so many strangers at once and I tried to get up so I could run. Sarah Clarke's eyes flickered; she understood. "Stand back," she said softly to Tom Warren and Cam in her deep yet gentle voice. And then I lay back again and she rubbed my forehead, and her eyes, I thought, had all colours in them, but that was the sunlight on them. She was indeed a strange, sweet woman and very beautiful, and I was as wild as a wild goose.

"We'll carry you home in the wagon," said Sarah Clarke invitingly. "Where do you live?"

I saw then that invalidism had gone far enough. I did not want to be carried and, besides, I really felt better, so I jumped up and dodged away a little like a coyote and then turned half around and looked at them over my shoulder, which also was like a coyote.

"Come, get in the wagon. You look very white," said Mrs. Clarke.

I said I was much obliged but that I felt "fine," that I declined to ride and that I was not any whiter than usual. I stood still, however, and groggily watched them move off, Cam circling the wagon on Nan, the pony, and yelling, "Yip, yip, yip!" like a

Comanche, and old Tom trying very hard not to swear at the mules.

I liked Cam and I admired him for not being thrown off by the skittish mare as I had been; and, indeed, I still admire him as much for the riding he did that day as for being king of seventeen railroads. Most people direct from Worcester, Massachusetts, cannot stick on a cayuse as long as they can on a banana peeling. Sarah Clarke waved her hand at me as she went and smiled and that hurt me back inside in my feelings some place so I laughed as hard as I could. Which reminds me that a man's feelings are located in his throat, at his eyes and around his stomach.

As soon as they were gone I crawled in behind a patch of service-berry bushes and lay down on the ground and cried like a "nigger" at a stranger's funeral, and it was not on account of my fall but on account of the kindness and gentleness I had experienced at the hands of those strangers. I was not used to such extravagant treatment even from people I knew, and it prodded up my emotions until they stampeded and got entirely beyond control. It was like thirsty cattle going for water.

After about fifteen minutes I got my mind into the saddle and sent it up to hit my emotions on the nose and head them off. Pretty soon I had them going in a circle, milling, as it were, and then they stopped and I felt better. I wiped my eyes on my sleeve, gave up snaring squirrels for the day and went on a *pasear* over town, favouring my neck a little, as it was stiff.

Washtucna had already commenced that spring to accumulate inhabitants. The single dusty street had

recently been adorned with a new shack of a blacksmith shop where William Hoefner and his short, stout, laughing German wife, Ana, shod horses and set wagon tires. I mention the wife as a mechanic because she could swing a sledge like a man and spill water on a hot wagon tire with beautiful facility. On occasions she, indeed, had triced up her skirts and helped shoe a recalcitrant horse. She was a very good-natured, fat woman, but she ruled her husband with an iron hand, which everybody agreed was proper.

I strolled up what Washtucna called " the street " in the bright shining sunlight and found Cam and his mother sitting on the wagon seat in the shade in front of John Donnelly's store. My own brothers and sisters were peeping around various corners looking at them in timid curiosity. I have since read of similar conduct on the part of Papuans and Javanese on being visited by white travellers. Oh, they were as wild as mountain sheep and I, for the first time realising it, felt ashamed and bored by it all — as though one ought ever to be ashamed of anything! Besides these, no other persons were in sight.

I did not peep; I disgustedly shied a clod of earth at Larry and went up boldly alongside the Clarkes' wagon and remarked conversationally that the mules looked " awfully poor," and I even tried to herd up my family. But it would have been no more difficult to herd prairie chickens. I gave it up.

Cam, having considered my remark, admitted that they *looked* poor. " But," said he, and he never smiled, " of course you can't tell whether they really are poor or not. You only see the *outside* of 'em

and it's hard to say how fat they are inside. Did you ever see the inside of a mule?"

This piece of argument struck my admiration in the bull's-eye. I did not know such a thing could be done as to argue like that and I had never speculated anyway as to what could be inside a mule. New vistas opened up: a fellow need never admit anything; what was inside a pig or a watch? I was glad I was alive; here were new interests, which are the best things one man imparts to another. Henceforth I should never have a dull moment. I could go about wondering what was inside things. Cam was a born imparter of interests. All his life he electrified people by making them see for the first time that they had a big toe or a thumbnail or that water was fluid. And he always liked fancy, speculation, argument and every possible healthy exercise of the mind.

I have said that Cam liked argument, even as a boy, and I may add that he carried his guns "ready manned." You might as well try to sneak up on a wild goose that was looking right at you as to try to catch Cam napping. I used to make a business of trying and I believe that at one time later in Cam's life some hundreds of people were trying the same thing. It did not work; nobody ever caught him that I have heard of. I know I never did.

I had been about petrified with admiration by Cam's speculative remark. But I gradually recovered and while I wiggled my toes in the dust I thought it over and reflected about mules on my own account. Finally I raised my head and looked around contemplatively myself, just as Cam would

have done. It must have been Saturday, for Washtucna's hitching posts were fringed with dozing cayuses carrying huge double-cinch saddles of the Mexican type, but I could not see men any place. Why was that? Donnelly's store was empty and my father was not at his cobbler's bench by the dirty window. This was extraordinary, for my father seldom left his bench at that time of day.

"Where is everybody?" I asked, somewhat disturbed for fear I was missing something.

Sarah Clarke answered me in rather an intent, impatient voice but with smiling eyes, and I listened and took my first long look at her. She was dressed very plainly in some dark cloth stuff such as Washtucna seldom saw and I thought she was thin, very thin, indeed, and very delicate looking. I remember her eyes better than anything. They came under a wide brow and they were blue and gray mixed and I thought they flickered like a fire, just as Cam's did, and I remember that they had heavy, dark circles under them. She was sitting with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands, and when she was not talking her eyes looked off at the dim distance.

"I don't know," she said, "but they seem to have all gone into that saloon over there, the Washtucna Rest," and she smiled and went on, with a puckered brow, "I guess they deserve the rest but I wish Mr. Warren would come out. He went in there ever so long ago and others have filed in and filed in and no one comes out — what's your name?"

"Mart Campin," this from me.

"Well, Mart, do you suppose he's all right? I

don't like to interfere with people's habits and if it's customary to spend a half day at the Washtucna Rest I'm satisfied — well, he said to wait and we will if it's a year." And she shrugged her shoulders and put her strange eyes to looking at something about a million miles away.

I saw at once that it would be impossible to surprise Sarah Clarke, for she had learned to shrug her shoulders. Any one who has ever seen an American whose experience has taught him to make that gesture knows that such people are prepared for everything, a surprise has no chance.

I looked at her steadily for a long time, she quite unconscious of my scrutiny, and I thought her very beautiful with her wide, placid brow, her rich, thick hair and her gray-blue flickering eyes. Yet she looked desolate, as desolate as the wind-swept Joseph's Plains. I told her she was " awful beautiful." Again she shrugged her thin shoulders, but she smiled a friendly smile.

Presently I had a flash of thought concerning Tom Warren.

" You ain't hearn any talk of hangin', have you? " I asked cautiously.

Sarah Clarke looked at me with a faint smile. " No, I haven't. Why, no."

" Well," I replied, " a hangin' is the only thing I ever saw make Washtucna act this way before. She gets locoed same way before they hanged Sam Hopkins — I'm goin' in an' see. Don't want to miss nothin'."

With that I dodged off and I saw over my shoulder enough of her expression to make me sure that

in Worcester, Massachusetts, people did not let small boys go into drinking saloons to investigate hanging bees, which shows how old-fashioned Worcester, Massachusetts, was and in what refinement Mrs. Clarke had been raised.

I went inside the " Rest " very quietly, in order to minimize the danger of being ejected, which was fairly large, for there were people around even Washtucna who considered a saloon a bad place for a boy.

Everybody in town that day was in the little dingy shack of a saloon grouped around old Tom Warren, near the stud-poker table by the back door, and all were smoking. Old Tom was talking in his jargon of mixed technical languages. In the crowd were all the most prominent people of the district, Judge Rusher, Mr. Beauclerc, William Hoefner, Jan Havland, Skookum Jones, John Donnelly, Jim Hall, John Bradford and many others, but just who I can not remember now. As Judge Rusher and Mr. Beauclerc were respectively the leaders of the Sinners and Saints factions, I was surprised to see them and the followers of each of them all in one room, evidently with a common object in view and that apparently not the extinction of human life. Indeed, people were rather friendly. Tom Warren continued talking for some time, pausing frequently to wipe his bleared eyes with a bandana handkerchief.

" I tell you, gents," said Tom earnestly, " this here is Washtucna's chance to get in the saddle a live, clean, thoughtful and beautiful lady. Washtucna needs a figgerhead, what you might call a mas-

cot or a regimental colours; somethin' to rally around and holler for. Here's this place now with no more communal speerit than a dyin' snail and you sittin' around Saturday nights smokin' and plannin' to shoot each other up and drinkin' and talkin' of home an' wishin' you was at sea on a bamboo raft an' no water instead of here. And here's a railroad comin' down on top of you with all sail set to royals and she's comin' like a herd of stampeded cattle. Are you ready? You air not. You gotto cheer up and get together and, gents, here's your chance. Make this here town a credit to itself. You can't join together in thin air, you gotto have somethin' to work to, somethin' to make fast a line, 's you might say. Here's your chance and you gotto take it. A lady is cast up here right on our beach, as you might say; and it's our privilege to welcome her at the gangway and get her good quarters here so she can stay aboard and be a nucleus 'round which you can grow a proper public speerit and afterwards calk it and pay it and make it seaworthy and responsible.

" Now here ye air, Saints and Sinners, all divided up into hostile camps and hankerin' to steal each other's cattle and hosses and to shoot each other up and not carin' a damn about Washtucna's future. Gents, I want you to help this lady the best we can."

" Men," said Judge Rusher, who was small, round bellied and red faced and with a close-cropped beard, " men, I do not desire to seem aspersive as to the band of criminals which under the hypocritical name of Saints have heretofore several times tried to assassinate me. Yet I am not afraid of them; I defy and despise them. I would be aspersive if I wanted

to but I hoist Washtucna's flag higher than my own; I hold my loyalty to her higher than hatred for Saints before-mentioned. And I feel certain that I speak with the tongue of every Sinner here when I announce my previous, antecedent and unchangeable loyalty to Washtucna."

Mr. Beauclerc, who was the leader of the opposition party, was tall, bony, large shouldered, thin lipped and pale coloured and had a stoop. He said in a solemn, gloomy voice, rolling his eyes around the room, that, as far as he was concerned, he would disregard his quarrel with these pestering horse-flies of black legs, which had late bothered him a little, same being styled Sinners by some people; but as for himself he never called them Sinners, as were we not all sinners in the solemn eyes of God? All differences with the before-mentioned parties he would overlook when they prejudiced Washtuchna's interests or this lady he was being told of.

The remarks of Judge Rusher and Mr. Beauclerc had at various stages moved people stealthily to feel for their revolvers, not with any intention of using them, but as a prudent precaution. Their total effect, however, was soothing.

Immediately afterwards, almost interrupting Mr. Beauclerc, indeed, Mr. Skookum Jones, a wee, wizened old man in a shabby high silk stove-pipe hat, a long Prince Albert coat, shiny with wear, white whiskers, high-heeled, dusty boots and a flannel shirt, raised his squeaky and piercing voice in a sharp "ahem!" and then blew a loud blast on his huge red nose. Everybody listened. Mr. Jones was a non-partizan. People laughed at him and loved

him; the laugh, however, was never to his face as he was as bellicose as a hornet.

" Gents," said he, placing two fingers between the top buttons of his waistcoat, " gents, I'm a heap impressed by these sentiments that Tom has been spouting off. They're all right. I'm for keeping this lady on Washtucna flats if it can be done: we need her. For when the railroad comes in I'm opposed to having 'em calls us a race of savages onused to the usages of society and politeness. I have in my younger days," and here the old man's voice softened and he squinted reminiscently, " associated considerably with some of the aristocracy of this country, of which I judge this lady is a member, and they were peculiar. But "— and he recovered himself sharply —" how are we going to persuade this lady to stay; we have not milliner shops, we have not dressmakers nor lingery stores; what have we? I do not know the lady, having merely seen her, but I esteem her and admire her appearance considerable. Now perhaps she's matrimonially inclined, in which case, though I have no desire to accumulate entangling alliances, I might note,"— and here Mr. Jones's hands trembled and his fingers tattooed the top of the stud-poker table —" I might note that I own three thousand acres of land and that I keep a Chinese cook, same being well liked by Easterners, though from time to time the boys do try to pot him, not liking cheap labour. Also that I'm willing to do what I can for this community in this way, as well as others, and that I admire the lady considerable and, if it's desired, matrimonial negotiations could be opened on my behalf. I have looked at the lady and I admire

her a heap. She's the same breed as the high class people I knew when I was a young man."

Mr. Skookum Jones again blew his nose loudly and sat down.

A subterranean smile went around the table but no face lost its external gravity of appearance. It was well known that Mr. Jones had considered himself for years a great prize in the matrimonial market and his willingness at last for the sacrifice was humorous as well as touching. Evidently Mr. Jones was earnest for he trembled like a leaf.

Mr. Pete Barker, the gambler, and Bob Dalton, a young rancher, stepped to the front window and looked out at Sarah Clarke over the soap-whited portion of the glass. I looked out too.

Sarah Clarke was sitting on a cracker box in front of Donnelly's store, elbows on knees, chin in hand, looking off at nowhere, while Cam, with his red head thoughtfully drooped, was tickling the nigh mule in the flank with a willow wand and with actually a spiritual expression on his face was waiting for the mule to kick.

It was easy for even Mr. Barker and Mr. Dalton to see that Sarah Clarke was different from the people of the Palouse Country. She was slender and straight backed and as proud looking as an Arabian mare and the marks of breeding and breed were on her face and showed in her carriage.

Mr. John Bradford, a stranger who had for a month been a steady guest at the Tennessee Restaurant and Hotel, came over to join them. Mr. Bradford was as different from the other men in that little bar-room as was Sarah Clarke from the women

of the Palouse. He was well-groomed and, although extremely taciturn, he was always cordial and polite. Also, he was dressed, though modestly, in the top of the London styles. Until this time he still was considered by Washtucnans a mysterious figure, for he had thus far not vouchsafed the information, which later went the rounds, that he was a young man of fortune from Vermont who had shot a neighbour in a quarrel over cards. If Washtucna had known this she would have embraced him, for she understood very well how such things happen and she could have sympathised with him. But being in ignorance, she doubted Mr. Bradford, although these doubts were not ever mentioned to him; on account, I believe, of a look in his eyes at certain times which was aptly described later by Mr. Boylston, a Boston gentleman exiled from his family on account of his unusual habits, as a "no trespassing sign." Mr. Bradford in solitary grimness had stayed at the Tennessee Hotel, had gone shooting, had bought a small amount of land for cash and had bothered nobody. People said he was a capitalist, but this was no explanation, for, like Tom Warren, no one in Washtucna had hitherto been shipmates with a capitalist. Always he had worn London clothes and smoked a bulldog pipe. Joining Bob Dalton and Mr. Pete Barker at the windows of Jan Havland's saloon was his first act that showed any interest whatsoever in the civic affairs of Washtucna. He gazed one long searching look, then his eyes shifted and met first those of Mr. Dalton, then those of Mr. Barker. There was no difference of opinion amongst them. They were unanimous, so they strolled non-

chalantly back to the crowd around the poker table, where sat poor Skookum Jones in faded finery and dignity.

The self-appointed committee was about to report on the proposal of Mr. Skookum Jones. It was a joke, yet almost every person there would have preferred to omit that particular joke. Skookum Jones was such a likable little old man, so generous, so kindly. Had he not ridden twenty miles in snow to people's weddings and deaths, lent people money and given them confectionery and blankets? He had played trained nurse and soldier. Moreover, he was sensitive and irritable. But it was all too much to think of. Mr. William Hoefner, the smith, wiped his sooty brow on a red handkerchief, the while he was *liebering Gott,* or some such thing. The committee sat down and I went from the door to the poker-table to hear what was said, but before I went, I " cuist a look ahint me," hoping to see Cam's mule kick at him. I was rewarded, but it kicked the roan pony tied alongside it, and broke two of its ribs and never touched Cam.

When I arrived at the edges of the crowd, I heard Mr. Pete Barker's voice raised in mild expostulation.

" I declare, Skookum," I heard him say, " I declare, I don't believe," and here he crossed his legs carefully and twirled the big diamond ring on his finger, " I don't believe that marriage is just the thing for that woman at this time. She's just widowed. You better sort of put a brake on this marital business for a while, Skookum. Wait until she's used to the range. Anyway, an old long-horn like you don't want to marry into the short-horns.

You all are different folks. I'm of the opinion, sir, that this ain't just the thing — you see, Skookum, the fact is —"

And then I felt the wind swish by me and Sarah Clarke herself came sweeping into that dirty little frontier drinking saloon. Every man stood up. Sarah Clarke was very pale and calm and beautiful. She looked neither right nor left but demurely walked across the sawdust sprinkled floor and sat down.

" I wish you would all sit down, gentlemen," she said in a low, calm voice. There was a scraping of chairs and most of the men sat down awkwardly. She looked around them inquiringly, man by man, eye to eye. Some wiggled and squirmed, others were placid and patient. Mr. John Bradford was in the far corner leaning against the wall. Mr. Skookum Jones's fingers were trembling. I wanted to cry.

" I may be mistaken," she said hesitatingly and in some embarrassment, and her eyes did what I have called a flickering movement — I wonder what it really was that happened in them. " I may be mistaken, but I fancied that you were talking about my affairs — if I have presumed —" and she made a gesture as if to go, but a dozen voices protested and reassured her. That part being settled, she quietly looked them around again and placidly clasped her hands.

" I suppose," said she in her warm, low-pitched voice, which yet was intense, " I suppose that you have been generous enough to wonder this last half hour what you could do for me and I am very grateful to you for all that if it is so — and I think it is —"

and she looked a question to which every one responded, " Sure, sure," and, " Yes." She went on, " and I've been wondering, as I sat on that old cracker box out there, what I could do and what you could do even if you wanted to be kind. I will tell you how things are. My husband died out near Mr. Warren's; I am poor: in fact, I have nothing in the world that isn't tied to those hitching posts out there, which is to say, two mules, a wagon and a camp outfit; and I'm not very strong. But I want to stay out here and I want to work and I still can work. All you can do, you see, is to get me some kind of work I am able to do and to let me sell that big wagon and the bony old mules "— and she smiled —" and just to live on. I suppose I must get a cabin somehow," this wistfully, " but in the meantime I can camp. I could go home if I had a home, but I haven't one and I don't want to go any place; I want to stay here and I want Cam to stay — do you suppose — is there any sewing needing to be done — or any children to be taught things — like music and lessons and things, or —"

" Madam," said Judge Rusher heartily, " Washtucna is delighted at your prejudices and preferences in its favour as a residence and, as for sewing, there ain't hardly anything in the Palouse Country that doesn't need some sewing done on it; and, as for the children, they don't know anything, they need to be taught everything, their ignorance is disgraceful. Madam, you're all fixed as far as that is concerned."

" By chiminy! " interrupted the little blacksmith, William Hoefner, " and there's gettin' more clothes

unt more little vuns efery day — dere ain't no dancher of bein' mitout a chob; no, sir, dere ain't nothin' of dat kint; yes, sir!"

"Do you suppose there really is a need for the work I mentioned?" asked Mrs. Clarke, rather anxiously glancing from face to face, somewhat reassured, but embarrassed lest fate be hoaxing her.

Chair legs scraped enthusiastically in answer to this query and several bass voices said, "Sure," "Sartin," and, "Of course there is," from which it was evident that Washtucna intended to continue to produce untaught children and undone mending in whatever quantity was desired.

"Madam," said Mr. Pete Barker gravely, "you'd be astonished if you had any idea of the amount of sewing and instruction this district needs. My friend, Judge Rusher, underestimates it."

"Why, yes," said Mr. Bob Dalton genially, "why, yes, madam, you would positively weep if you could see the disastrous condition of the wardrobes hereabouts and all for the lack of the stitch in time that saves nine, and the shamefully uninstructed condition of the children. It's a fright! Madam, your forchun is made if you can sew things. Only this mornin' as I was sewin' on a button I stabs my finger a heap and to avoid such pain and mortification I'd gladly pay any sum. You have no idea how I rejoice to be spared sech bother."

"As for the mules of this lady," said Mr. Beauclerc, speaking crisply, biting off the end of a long, black cigar and teetering his body on his toes and positively rattling a chair on the floor in his good spirits, an amount of enthusiasm never before shown

by him on any occasion, " as for the mules, I recommend an auction and, if it's convenient to the lady, I move that it be held to-night at six P. M. in front of the post-office. Which it's fortunate that this country is shy in mules," and here that dignified and super-respectable gentleman winked.

Mrs. Clarke signified her approval and a chorus of voices agreed and applauded.

" In which case," went on Mr. Beauclerc, " I nominate Mr. Skookum Jones of Steptoe Butte to be auctioneer, he being a neutral, neither Saint nor Sinner, and a man of faith and good voice, and also Mr. John Bradford as money holder, he being likewise neutral and reliable, as I take it, though a stranger."

" Good," " All right," " Sure," " Sure it's Skookum and Bradford," said the voices.

" Gents," said Mr. Skookum Jones's sharp voice deliberately, and he shoved his plug hat back on his head, rose, knocked the dust off his trouser leg with his quirt and took a chew of tobacco, " which I accept with plaisure any opportunity to serve Mrs. Clarke. She's to be understood, however, that money'll be the only weapon in the crowd. This ain't to be a battle. Saints and Sinners having mortal antipathies can put 'em to rest by out-bidding each other, the scalps being figurative and represented by goods and chattels purchased. And this here sale has got to be advertised and, as it is already late, I delegate everybody here to see that there ain't any person within nine miles absent from this sale which absence ought not to be allowed.

" And now," he went on, " while the rest of you

all are employed in advertising this sale, Mr. Bob Dalton and I and Tom Warren will make camp for the lady down near the creek and likewise Mr. Bradford will list things up."

The hospitality of several houses, "such as they are," was immediately offered to Mrs. Clarke, but she, with thanks, expressed a preference for camping out.

"In which case," said Mr. Jones, "I'll lead the lady out, as, with profuse apology to Mr. Havland, I reckon Mrs. Clarke is somewhat tiring of standing around in a rum shop. Gents, *au revolver!*"

Mr. Havland accepted the apology and Mrs. Clarke moved out on the thin arm which Mr. Skookum Jones gallantly offered to her. In glory and perspiration the meeting broke up, but I judge that business at the bar was afterwards very brisk in the few moments that preceded the sending out of the advertising parties.

I helped to make the camp and each particular detail was attended to by each of the three men with such meticulous care that it was time for the sale when the thing was finished. But it was a good camp: it would have stood a West India hurricane or the rigors of an arctic winter. In the meantime Mr. John Bradford spent three hours in listing a small number of articles for sale, but I suppose he would have taken as much time had there been but one article.

The sale was planned and executed with remarkable speed and success. My judgment at that time was in some respects immature, as all sums above twenty-five cents were to me entirely incomprehen-

sible, and I give no opinion as to the prices realised. But from what I heard afterwards I judge that they were reasonably high and that each article was the subject of the most spirited bidding. Mr. John Bradford, in particular, purchased by the weight of superior wealth a number of articles for which he had no possible use. In this he was closely seconded by Mr. Skookum Jones, who, though auctioneer, reserved the privilege of bidding where he listed.

At any rate, at about eight o'clock, as Cam and I were poking the camp fire, Mr. Skookum Jones rode in on his pinto cayuse, threw his reins on the ground and came in amongst us with a bundle of coins made up in an elaborately flowered, clean silk handkerchief. Mr. John Bradford was with him. Skookum silently presented this bundle to Mrs. Clarke with as low a bow as the squeaky hinges of his back would permit and while she opened it with an eagerness creditable to a lone woman with a child to support, he and John Bradford backed up to the fire as men like to do. I remember that with the smoke and sparks circling up behind them they made a fantastic picture there on the prairie, what with Mr. Skookum Jones's long coat and high, square topped hat and Mr. Bradford's turned up trousers and faultless cravat.

Mrs. Clarke gave a little exclamation of surprise when the pile of coins was revealed to her.

"It could not have been so much," she protested. "It is five times too much."

"The boys was fairly appreciative of the articles, ma'm," said Skookum jauntily and mendaciously. "I refer in particular to the live stock. You see Judge Rusher and Mr. Beauclerc were just deter-

mined to have 'em. And others needed things, too."

"It is much more than the things cost. I expected to get almost nothing," said Mrs. Clarke uneasily.

"It's a good market here," said Mr. Bradford thoughtfully.

"You got 'em cheap, too," said Skookum firmly, lighting a cigar, "and of course you make a little on 'em. I never saw sech a pop'lar pair of mules in my life. I got one myself; took her away from Rusher and Beauclerc and Bradford, here. She'll make a fine animal when she's fat, best in the Palouse, I guess. Oh, mules are good property. Yes — sir; just thrive on bunch grass, yes'm."

"Was that the deformed one?" asked Mrs. Clarke quickly.

"Deformed? — not much! Just bench-legged, a sure sign of strength, ma'm. Bradford, here, wanted her, too. Anybody would."

Mrs. Clarke made a queer face of acceptance and, I think, was half ready to cry. Old Skookum evidently thought so too. He flung himself onto his pinto cayuse, chirruped to him and our good-nights could scarcely have overtaken him, so fast he went. Mr. Bradford said good-night very formally and also left promptly.

We sat by the fire for a long time, the stars came brighter and brighter and Sarah Clarke talked. She told me about New York and Boston and theatres and paved streets and all this time the coyotes were howling on the hills. I did not believe Boston and New York really existed, still it was entertaining to hear yarns of them. Could the Palouse Country and

great cities be on the same earth or in the same life? It seemed highly improbable. But I did not care. I liked the Palouse Country. But if there were such places I would take a week off when I was grown and go look at them.

Going home in the bright starlight I looked over my shoulder often and all the way saw Cam and Sarah Clarke sitting motionless by the dying camp fire. They were strange; every one else would have gone directly to bed, dead with fatigue.

CHAPTER V

TWO days later in the forenoon my old friend Mr. "Gunnysack" Charlie Williams came trailing down the stage road behind his pack burro, Mary, while ahead of Mary was the bob-tailed, brindle dog Bob, with his tongue hanging out a foot, as it was a hot day. And metaphorically speaking Gunnysack Charlie's tongue was hanging out too, for he had not had a drink of hard liquor in months.

Cam and I saw the procession coming down the gulch when it was a mile away. I recognised it at a glance, for I had seen Gunnysack late in the autumn before when we first came to Washtucna and no one else ever had an outfit like his or travelled as he did. His frying pan was polished so bright that it shone like a mirror and every buckle and fastening was polished also. But Gunnysack was, as usual, clad in old rags patched with burlap. This was an affectation of his. He was as careful in choosing his rags as John Bradford was in choosing his London clothes and, to admit the truth, they were as becoming. I have some doubt, however, as to whether Gunnysack Charlie is normal mentally — or rather I have no doubt that he is abnormal — although if I did not feel confident that he would never read this book I should not write thus freely of him.

Gunnysack Williams was already rather a friend of mine. He had liked me on sight, perhaps because my

clothes were not so dissimilar to his. I had told Cam about him, so we strolled out to meet him. He was in no wise changed since our last encounter except that he looked elated. He was garbed up from the rag bag but he was scrupulously clean and he was even neatly and freshly shaven. His elation was bubbling over, he was radiant with smiles and he was charmed and delighted to see us.

" I'm real glad to see you, Mr. Gunnysack," I said, shaking hands with him. I said " Mister " because I knew he liked titles. " You've been away a good while too, Mr. Gunnysack, and Washtucna has changed a lot. There are lots of new people and this here is Cam Clarke, who's a tenderfoot here himself, and him and me are goin' into the cow business when we get grown up, and we mostly bum around together."

Cam and Mr. Gunnysack solemnly shook hands while Mary ate a sun-flower top and Bob wiped himself all over my legs, which was his way of showing friendship. Also he licked me with his big tongue.

" Whisth, ye young divils," said Mr. Gunnysack, " I'd have ye know I've been up amangst the snow on the Sivin Divils prospectin' for gold, an' me all alone, too; and I give ye me word that it's a pleasure to see ye. Cam, me bhoy, this town Washtucna must av inflated itself twinty-five percint since ye adopted it f'r a home, I can tell by the spread av the houses — now go on, Mary, ye she divil, ye! don't be afther atin' all the sun-flowers in the Palouse! Will ye go on thin — ye, Bob, ye! have ye no manners wipin' yersilf on the young min that way? Lave be! And washin' him wid yer tongue like as if he was a tin

plate with bacon on it. Have ye no manners at all, at all?"

"What are the Seven Devils?" asked Cam interestedly.

"Brawlin', noisy streams, me son; lovely, sor, but freezin' cold and with the mountains risin' straight up."

"Did you find gold, Mr. Gunnysack?" asked Cam eagerly, his eyes snapping.

Gunnysack looked at Cam cautiously, then he smiled and winked at me and at Bob and at Mary and at the prairie. He had evidently made up his mind to be canny.

"Wud ye hear the bhoy, Mart?" he said, addressing me. "Wud ye but hear him? He asks if I found it. Phwat may his name be afther bein', did ye say? The young divil, and ye wud be afther startin' a gold sthampede t'morry, I s'pose, or stealin' me claim. Oh, ye divils of childers!" and he laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh, I'm Cam Clarke," said Cam softly, "and Mart and I are interested in gold, ever so much."

And then he and old Gunnysack had a serious conversation on the subject of gold. Gunnysack talked to Cam as though he were an equal in age and experience, which he never does to me to this day. This was a characteristic transaction for Cam: that is why I mention it at length. He could impress people. He had personality beyond any one I ever saw. What his intelligence is, every one knows.

"And so you're Cam Clarke, are ye?" said Gunnysack softly, in a voice such as he would have used if he were accusing him of being Buffalo Bill or

Abraham Lincoln or some other person in history. There may have been mockery in the remark but it did not show. Under such circumstances I should have wiggled and run away, but Cam did not; anything that came along seemed entirely natural to him.

" Did you say you found gold? " asked Cam again, looking at Mary very carefully and even stooping his red head to look at her tiny feet. " Did you ever find gold any place, Mr. Gunnysack? " This was insulting.

Mr. Gunnysack smiled shrewdly again, filled his pipe and told Mary to hurry along. " Are ye not aware yet, me friend, from Mart here," he protested gently, " that I'm half owner of the *Gintle Annie* and the *Bull-dog?* Yis, sor, I came over the mountains with Mullin in Fifty-nine. And was it for nothin'? Was not Cayuse Jimmy me partner? Oh, I have gold stored in places ye'd niver expect — but, ye young divil, I'll not inform ye where, not I. And ye may put that in yer pipe and smoke it. Ye'd turn claim jumper and 'tis not a gintle profession. I'd niver forgive mesilf — niver — but look! " and he unswathed three small nuggets and allowed us to look at them.

By this time we had arrived at the hitching rack in front of Donnelly's store. When we tied up, Mr. Donnelly came out of the store and cast his corkscrew eye contemplatively over Mr. Gunnysack.

" You are back again," he said languidly, " and still wearing them weeds of poverty. 'God sake, Gunnysack, come in and I'll give you some store clothes. I get so sick of you; every summer same, only worse."

"Ye may go to hell," said Gunnysack firmly, and I dodged behind the burro thinking there would be a fight with guns. But Cam never moved, which events proved was good enough policy.

"Will ye be afther sellin' me some sugar for me mule?" asked Gunnysack belligerently, "'r has yer sthore got any? It never has nothin' as I remember it — and yet, have I iver been in it? I don't remimber for sure."

"I will not sell to you," said Mr. Donnelly languidly, in his tired voice, at the same time holding to Mary some brown sugar in his hand. As Mary swept it up with her lips, he reiterated, "I will not sell to you. You are a cruel master of beasts to take her so far fr'm a grocery store and up to the everlastin' snow on the Seven Devils. I'll feed her myself, as her master cain't take care of her. I suppose you got nothin' up there either 'cept more patches and an appetite. I suppose —"

"I repeat it, ye may go to hell, Mr. Donnelly," insisted Gunnysack doggedly. "Mart, is me friend Jan Havland still dispinsin' dew drops to the community? Which is to say, is his grog dive still open?"

"He is," said Mr. Donnelly, answering tiredly and pulling his long moustache and rolling his eye. "And we'll go right in and lift one in together, Charlie, as I'm anxious to hear how you've avoided starving for another year. Your efforts being so futile, as I might say." And he took Mr. Gunnysack by the arm and led him into the Washtucna Rest where we heard them still apparently quarrelling.

I came out from behind Mary, the burro. Cam

was sitting at some few feet distance tickling Mary in the flank with a thin stick, which, as I afterwards learned, was his favourite way of making acquaintance with horse and mule animals of all sorts. If they were any good they would eventually kick, but if they kicked too soon they were mean. Mary presently kicked and Cam was satisfied. He thought she was about right for a mule.

"Warn't ye afraid they'd fight?" I asked of Cam afterwards.

"Shuh," said Cam assuredly, "they wouldn't fight. I bet they have been abusin' each other forever that way. I bet they are old friends. They do it for fun."

Afterwards I learned that Cam was right. I heard them say, indeed, that they used to know each other down in Yreka Flat, California, when they were young men. But every boy could not have guessed that they were old friends; it took Cam.

I said, "Cam, how did you know?"

He only answered, "Shuh, can't you tell a jack knife from a sheet o' paper?"

I said I could; and that was all the answer I got. That was the way he always answered questions. Such answers make you tired at first but as you remember them longer than any other kind I suppose they are good answers. And if you made a whole lot of them you'd be Cam Clarke.

That morning Bob Dalton, Pete Barker and Frenchy Clemens were in town, as I could tell very easily by the ponies at the hitching rack, for I knew about every saddle in the Palouse Country, though not all the ponies, which were without number. A

little while after Gunnysack and Donnelly went into the Rest, I heard them jabbering around and talking and talking with Dalton, Barker and Clemens and I wondered what they were planning, for they evidently were not quarrelling.

I said presently, " Come on, Cam, le's go see! I can't have anything go on around here and me not know what it is. Le's go into Jan Havland's an' listen! "

But apparently Cam was thinking of something important, for I could not get even an answer out of him. Consequently I sneaked away alone, and as I looked back I saw that Cam had not noticed my departure at all. He was a strange boy, I thought, but always faking more or less. I could not understand him.

When I got into the Rest to see what they were really talking about, the first thing I heard was Gunnysack's voice. He was talking with great enthusiasm of building a house for Sarah Clarke, of whom he had evidently been informed in great detail by the other Washtucna gentlemen present. This, he said, would be his contribution as he had missed the sale.

" But where the divil shall we come at the lumber? Me virtue is as impatient as it is sympathetic and I'm wantin' to start at wanct. I'll not wait till they haul it fr'm Bricker's; no sor, I will not."

" If you gents want to do that," said I, carelessly sauntering up, " why, if you really want to, what you can do is to hog up that load of lumber left by Mr. Ford when he died after bein' shot by Aleck Stout that time, which you'll remember, as it's left down by

the ford of Day's Creek, just where he threw it off the wagon when his team got stuck."

Mr. Pete Barker turned around and looked down for the source of this small voice that was volunteering the advice. When he saw it was I, he grinned good-naturedly. "I declare," said he sweetly, but ironically, "how is it you and your dad haven't pinched that lumber for wood? It looks to me as though the Irish folks in this district are getting more and more shiftless. It's awful, so it is. They are the most shiftless people there are, and hollerin' for wood, too. You sure overlooked a bet, sonny."

I replied to irony with irony, which any Irish boy can do as soon as he can talk. "You know yourself, Mr. Barker," I said, "that takin' things like that is stealin', an' I don't see how you can talk about 'em that way or make sech mean remarks about my pa."

Mr. Gunnysack Charlie looked at me puzzledly and scratched his head. He knew I had stolen watermelons in Iowa, for I had told him so. He did not understand my talk now, but he bravely winked at me, as much as saying, "Trust me; I'll never tell on you."

"This saloon resort," said Gunnysack with a start, coming to a sense of duty, "ain't no place for childers, so she isn't."

"Sure it ain't," agreed Mr. Pete Barker, lifting me by the scruff of the neck and the patched seat of my trousers, "sure it ain't," and he carried me to the door and set me down gently outside it. "Now run on, Mart," he jeered softly, "and if we want any more help we'll send for you."

I stepped away, then turned around and cursed him, as that, at that time, was my idea of the way a spirited boy should act. Cam would have known better. Mr. Barker only grinned and closed the door. I am not sure but that he thought my retort clever. Of course he was mistaken. A boy gets much misinformation about different things but more about manners than about anything else.

I went away without any hard feelings whatever and sneaked up and kicked Cam in the ribs and told him to cheer up because the citizens of Washtucna were going to build him and Sarah Clarke a palace.

Cam was trying to catch a butterfly with a steel trap made for coyotes. He had borrowed it from Mary's pack without Gunnysack Charlie's consent. I did not think that it was well designed for butterfly work but Cam said it would do and then he punched me for kicking him and called me a liar for saying that Washtucna would build him and his mother a palace. As a result we had a fight which lasted for a long while and I got pretty well licked. After that we made up and we did not have to fight each other again for months. That was out of our systems.

The idea of a house for Sarah Clarke did not go from Gunnysack Charlie's mind. He kept busy. He gathered a crowd around him and he had, by the time Cam and I were free from fighting each other, got aboard tremendous loads of rum, energy and enthusiasm and such other stuff as makes you talk of building things. But he still seemed pretty sober and he went around and made everybody in Washtucna that day say that he also wanted to build Sarah Clarke a house. And, indeed, all of them did.

They had not any of them become staled on the pleasure of simultaneously doing a pretty woman and their town a service.

Of Gunnysack's converts Mr. Pete Barker and Mr. Bob Dalton were excessively enthusiastic and they were practical. They went to work at once. Now Mr. Pete Barker was undoubtedly the most elegant gambler in the Palouse Country but he nevertheless stripped down to a boiled shirt. Then he and Bob Dalton and Gunnysack impressed a teamster who was hauling flour to Colfax but who had stopped for a drink in Washtucna. They gave him several additional drinks, whereupon he became interested in building operations himself. They unloaded his flour and made him haul lumber from the pile of the late lamented Mr. Ford down near the creek, which the teamster said he was glad to do. At this point Mr. John Bradford took off his English coat, rolled up the sleeves of his monogrammed shirt and heartily turned to.

In the course of the afternoon other men took the contagion. And still, as the word spread, others and others came until there were more than fifty men at work. And every man who came stayed. Public opinion on that point was inexorable.

At first no one knew where or what to build but presently Judge Rusher donated a plot of ground in the heart of town. The variety of house was easier yet. They made it like all the rest of the houses in the Palouse Country and if any one doubted that it was beautiful, he omitted to say so. I, of late years, have had such doubts, but it serves me right for ever travelling in Italy. Of the utility of the model and

of the ease of throwing it together there could be no possible question. It was to have four rooms and a little porch. Mr. Skookum Jones held out for something more pretentious but was voted down.

They made a fearful racket with their hammers and saws and they looked as busy as though they were building a gallows for a horse thief; and, indeed, a hanging would not have excited more enthusiasm. They were really busy. Of the whole force only McGrath stole away from work to Jan Havland's saloon. The rest worked and continued to work. They would have " handed " Whitey some substantial mark of disapproval but they were too busy. Saints and Sinners, people who had threatened to kill each other, old friends and old enemies, tottering Skookum Jones and the Amazon Mrs. Hoefner, all working side by side and sweating. And they worked efficiently in their rough way, for they were people used to doing anything from frying an egg to performing a rude operation in surgery. Of them all no man worked harder than Mr. John Bradford, who soon had blisters on parts of his hands which he had never before known to be in existence.

Jokes went around, also serious remarks. I believe it was generally admitted that Mrs. Hoefner was the best mechanic on the job, that Judge Rusher was fatter than a man needed to be for a foot race and that Mr. Beauclerc's back cracked when he stooped over, as your big toe does when you bend it. Old Jimmy Day had the misfortune to break his arm and my father fell off the roof, but thanks to his usual condition of semi-intoxication he was uninjured. His remarks in comment on this fall were inspiring.

These events, however, in no wise dampened the enthusiasm of the party. Frequently some hoarse voice would shout, "Hurrah for Washtucna!" or, "Hurrah for Sarah Clarke!" and everybody would howl like a she-wolf. Sometimes again they sang hymns, which Mr. Beauclerc would lead in his best Sunday voice.

I do not know where Sarah Clarke stayed that day, but she never came near the new house. She knew what the noise was about, for Cam and I told her; but when we proposed that we all go over, she refused with some feeling, so Cam and I went without her. As we went, I remember that she looked pale. I suppose she could not have been well, and yet she was very beautiful.

They worked all afternoon, and for half the night they worked with lanterns and next morning they worked again. They supplemented the first load of lumber with more from I know not where. They stole window glass and nails from old Donnelly, who shut his eyes while they stole, and then he topped it by giving them a small cook stove. They manufactured tables and chairs, and Mr. McPetherick, the keeper of the hotel, discovered that the Tennessee Restaurant had more dishes than it could possibly use, so he brought some over, as he said, "to get shet of them." They got two beds from somewhere, Mr. John Bradford got a refrigerator, Jan Havland promised to keep it in ice; and finally at noon next day the house was pronounced finished and furnished to the last detail, Mrs. Rusher and Mrs. Beauclerc being called upon to verify the condition. That afternoon Washtucna

was in a peculiar condition, it was calm, as calm as a frozen lake. This was by agreement: no boisterous conduct or quarrelling should mar the day, and, for fear of disregarding the agreement, people spoke under their breath.

Mr. Pete Barker voiced the sentiments of the community concerning these remarkable hours of quiet. "We should be gen'rous and high-spirited," said he, rising to the full height of his seventy-four inches, "but this occasion is one demandin' dignified and reserved conduct on the part of every lady present, also gents. Person'ly I see no objection to takin' a drink, providin' you keep the thing silent and orderly after you get it down. But such drinks as stir up hell in folks should be left unconsumed. To-night we'll have dedication ceremonies, with regard to which Mr. Gunnysack Williams, who heads this movement, is consultin' Mr. John Bradford, which is an eastern sharp and versed in etiquette. Likewise he consults Skookum Jones and yours truly."

And so the town either imbibed silently or not at all. There was a Sabbath quiet on the place; not the Sabbath quiet of Washtucna, for Washtucna had no Sabbath quiet; but the Sabbath quiet of some town that gave as much attention to church bells as Washtucna did to enjoying herself in ruder recreations.

The dedication ceremonies started shortly after the crowded Colfax stage rolled in, in a cloud of dust, from Spokane. Mr. Pete Barker, Mr. Gunnysack Williams, Mr. John Bradford and Mr. Skookum Jones made a committee which had the approval and confidence of every one and their actions were backed up and indorsed. They handled the affairs of the

evening with vigour and promptness. First they politely emptied the stage of all passengers. They said they wanted to borrow the coach and by way of recompense to travellers they extended to them " the hospitality of the city " and the use of Jan Havland's bar. Then they drove off in haste to the tune of cracking whip after Sarah Clarke to bring her to her new house. That there was something quaint and incongruous in the whole arrangement I can now readily see. Sarah Clarke could have walked over while the passengers were being cleared away, as she was close at hand, but Washtucna on this occasion wanted style and formality and Washtucna would have it or die. I remember that some of the passengers protested at ejection. To these Mr. Pete Barker talked very patiently.

" You all gents understand, I hope," he said softly, " that this riotous measure is taken without any desire to impede the traffic of this line. It is dire necessity —"

" It's an outrage! " sputtered a little man with a big moustache.

" Come here, brother; now hesh! or I'll choke you," said Mr. Bob Dalton, sardonically pulling the little man towards him and clapping his hand over his mouth. " Shove off the stage! Keep still, you little devil, or I'll bite off your head! "

That was the end of his protest, and, as I have said, the stage went for Sarah Clarke at a run. They brought her back on the seat beside the driver, which is, as every one knows, the seat of honour on account of the charming conversation of stage drivers. I remember how she looked as the stage bore down

on the big bon-fire: pale, oh, very pale, yet I thought her heart-breakingly beautiful; as beautiful as the pale morning stars. All Washtucna thought so too and as she climbed down from the high seat they stood about in awed silence.

They cleared a space in front of the new house and while Sarah Clarke sat in an arm chair in the doorway with the firelight flickering brightly upon her face, Mr. Skookum Jones mounted upon a box borrowed from Donnelly's store for the occasion. He stood for some time, his hand across his chest, looking at them all one by one until they were totally silent again.

" Gents," said he, finally commencing to speak, his voice somewhat hoarse at first, " gents, by the aid of Mr. Gunnysack Charlie Williams, Washtucna has at length unlimbered her public spirit. Gunnysack has come down out of the snowy Seven Devils with a message for us, which message was brotherly love and enterprise and philanthropy and has bore fruit. Hereafter Washtucna can be counted upon to slam the shrapnel of philanthropy, brotherly love and enterprise into every livin' carcass of a proposition that arises from the bunch grass of these Palouse Hills. We don't propose to be excelled in this kind of shooting any more than in the ordinary bullet and powder kind. And now, gents, on your behalf, I have the pleasure and honour to present this little house to the noble lady whose lovely character and high intelligence has made the worthless efforts of this community blossom like alfalfa under an irrigation ditch in the desert. And as I make this little offering, which all hands have laboured at — and with great

comfort — I propose three cheers for Mrs. Sarah Cameron Clarke, the lily and the wild-rose and the sunflower of this district, and for Mr. Gunnysack Charlie Williams. Hip-hip —"

They raised the cry, not with three cheers, but with twenty or ninety, a fusillade of them. I remember, amongst other things, that Mr. Pete Barker calmly and coolly cheered louder and longer than any one. When the others from hoarseness and lack of wind desisted, he continued. He howled like a she coyote in spring time, then he howled like a timber wolf, until no other person than Mr. Gunnysack Charlie Williams felt the impropriety of the noise and shut it off with a hand like a ham.

And then Sarah Clarke, with tears streaming down her thin face but with eyes that flashed with a fine languorous fire, stood up and waited and we all became so still that I heard the gurgling of the little creek a mile away and every man's heart beats were loud in his own ears. Then a puff of wind came down the little valley and whined disconsolately at the corners, as is the habit of winds in prairie lands.

When she started to thank those men, mostly brown-faced men, twisted and gnarled by their rough lives, her voice was broken, but her last words were as clear and flawless and lovely as pure water.

"I thank you very much," she said; "I thank you; I feel at home amongst you. I," and she smiled through her tears, "I love you all, every one."

When she stepped down from the little box we were all silent again until a gaunt, broad shouldered, bearded man, a passenger from the Colfax stage,

which, on account of the curiosity of the passengers, had not yet departed, pushed his way to the centre and stood up on the box himself.

" Mrs. Clarke, and ladies and gents," said he in a harsh voice, and he pulled his long beard to one side with a bony hand and showed his teeth in a leer which had no business to be pleasing but nevertheless was, " gents, I am A. J. Punts, M.D., and Punts is with you to the topmost limit of your pile of blues. I own a ticket to Colfax, but I'm going to stop right here. No weak shilly-shallying for me. I stay. I recognise public spirit when I see it and I see it now. You got it.

" This is the place I've been hunting for, but I've been hunting in the wrong place, mostly in Montana. This is hereafter the home of A. J. Punts, M.D., he stays for good. And that being the case I regret being late for co-operating in this building and philanthropic demonstration you've pulled off. It's a good job. And now, as I'm too late to help in that, I'd like to have the privilege of presenting to this lady, gratis, the lease of my medical services as she may need 'em, which may it be seldom, just as long as we both do live. Yes, sir! Gents, as I've already indicated, with your permission I'll stow my bony legs and share and share alike play at the municipal poker table of this place. And, gents, with enthusiasm I propose three cheers more for Mrs. Sarah Cameron Clarke. Hip-hip —"

We cheered again until we choked down like a political orator at the close of a " whirlwind campaign,"— the same being no more like a whirlwind than like a corkscrew and no one says " corkscrew

campaigns; " I wonder why not. Mr. Pete Barker's voice persevered as before until reduced by the personal application of Gunnysack's hand.

After that Sarah Clarke kissed Mr. Gunnysack Charlie, and everybody but me went home tired and satisfied and the stage pulled out amidst the cheers of its own passengers. But I stayed on with Cam and his mother for supper and during that meal she got up twenty times and kissed Cam and me and, though of course it made me hot and uncomfortable and I squirmed, I really did not object so very much. And I made up my mind that I liked her — I was not sure, indeed, that I did not like her as well as my own mother who lay up in the shadow of the flat topped Montana mountain where we had camped three nights on that endless journey west.

Over town they were carrying Mr. Gunnysack Charlie on their shoulders and singing war songs. That was the great night of Gunnysack Charlie's life. He still talks of it after thirty years have gone on and by.

Just as I left, Mr. John Bradford put his head in at the door. " If there is any way in which I can help you," he said, " I shall be glad if you'll tell me or send word — good-night! "

On my way home I met Dr. Punts and Skookum Jones going to enquire, said Skookum, " if there be any way in which we can serve her," to which sentiment Dr. Punts snarled a pleasant assent. These things were of a significance which I, in those days, little understood.

CHAPTER VI

ONE morning about a week after the house was finished, I met Cam carrying two books, a slate and a lunch basket. He was shiningly clean and he said he was going to school, as Sarah Clarke had decided that, though she could teach him herself, it would be better to have him go to school and associate with the other boys of the town; besides, Cam wanted to go for he thought it would be fun.

Going to school had not thitherto been very fashionable with me and I had, indeed, about given it up as a habit. There were a number of reasons: some days I did not feel like going, on other days I had real work to do and on still other days I was afraid to go for fear of being thrashed for my previous absences. This fear was well founded: Professor Stilson received no excuses. Besides, I had not really believed in education. It might make you look or act like Prof. J. Stilson, the teacher, and I had wanted to be in every respect like Mr. Bob Dalton, who had no education at all. But Cam Clarke's going to school made it look different. If education was good for him, it ought not to hurt me very much. I decided I would give it another chance. Besides, I did not want Cam to get started wrong with the boys who came from the ranches to school. I knew, of course, that he would have a fight with Sandy Rusher,

that was inevitable, and I wanted to see Sandy "licked" by Cam just as I had been. That would make Cam all right with the ranch boys. And I knew Sandy *would* be "licked," if Cam had a fair chance, for Cam had the calmest, most insidious and undeniable way of fighting I had seen up till then — or until now, for that matter. And, further, it was the kind of fighting Sandy could not stand, the calculated, silent yet passionate kind. Cam was as disconcerting as a bull terrier.

So I went along with Cam down to the log schoolhouse by the creek and we both went straight up to the rostrum where Professor Jim Stilson was sitting, chewing tobacco and reading the *Dramatic Tompeep*. This was characteristic. Tradition said he had once been an actor. At any rate he used all his spare time looking at the pictures of ladies in tights.

"Professor," I said, "I've been obliged to be away here for several days running, on account of sickness and work and such things — you know how it is in a large family — but I hope it ain't spoiled the school none, as I expect to come just plum regular after this as I'm determined to be educated."

Mr. Stilson looked at me calmly and sceptically, bit off a chew of tobacco, pulled his dyed black moustache with his crooked finger and thumb, rubbed his bald head and remarked severely that as far as he was able to see, my absence had been much more helpful to the school than my presence. Nevertheless, for my own sake he was glad to see me back.

"Who's this other young man?" he asked, jerking his finger at Cam, throwing one long leg across the desk and looking me fiercely in the eye.

I felt hopeful, because always heretofore Mr. Stilson had taken me firmly by the scruff of the neck before he addressed any remarks to me. Perhaps he would try moral suasion on me instead of brute strength. I hoped so, for, other people's statements to the contrary notwithstanding, moral suasion was pleasanter.

"This is Cam Clarke," said I, "whose ma and him just arrived recent in Washtucna. I reckon you've heard of her. He's been to school in Worcester, Mass., where they have the champion teachers of the U.S. and —"

"Well, Cam," said Mr. Stilson, languidly breaking in on me, putting the other foot on the desk and leaning back while he pulled both moustaches simultaneously, "I've heard that you are a boy of excellent character, but it sure does seem to me that you are gettin' into about the worst comp'ny you could find in Washtucna if you hunted. You sure are in bad and you better change."

Cam said afterwards that the professor had insulted me. It made Cam mad, although I had not minded at all — indeed, I had rather enjoyed it. He told me later that he knew the way he spoke in reply to Professor Stilson was not a tactful manner of addressing a schoolmaster, but he felt just "plum insolent." As far as I was concerned, I thought what Cam said was all right, too, for I was as accustomed to "jaw back" at people as I was to being insulted.

"Professor Stilson," he said in a voice as sweet as a canary bird's and as mild as a cat on Sunday morning, "now I don't think you're bad company at all; I

think you're hard on yourself. I don't mind being here with *you* the least bit; which is what you mean, I suppose, by saying I'm in bad company. Perhaps some of the boys are prejudiced against you, but I ain't. I think you are all right."

Of course Cam had misinterpreted Professor Stilson purposely and his reply naturally made Stilson angry and red in the face, but Cam's speckled eyes looked straight at him and never wavered and old Jim really thought Cam was innocent. I did not. I knew better and I decided that Cam was an interesting schoolmate.

Professor Stilson did not know what to do, but as I snickered out loud he made a decision, boxed me a smart clip on the ear and sent me to stand in the corner for the rest of the morning. Then he bawled out in deep chested, melodramatic tones for Cam to take the front seat and stay there, and he glowered at Cam like a sick bull.

Cam thanked him very politely and said he had always preferred a front seat anyway and always had one in Worcester, Massachusetts, as it kept him from being bothered and gave him a good chance to study. Then he winked at me, sat down and started taking an old Waterbury watch to pieces behind his geography, which enterprise made him look studious.

When little Julie Beauclerc came in and saw Cam, the new boy, sitting on the front seat the first day, she was indignant. She had never heard of such a cruel thing in all her experience, she said, and she stamped her foot and her eyes snapped and she flung her black, short hair around until she could hardly see. Mr. Jim Stilson pretended not to see or hear

her, for like everybody else he liked Julie Beauclerc and helped spoil her. But he kept Cam on the front seat, which was not a bad guess.

I spent the forenoon in peeping around the corner of my head and in throwing paper wads at people when old Jim's back was turned. I hit Sandy Rusher once in the eye, I remember, and I thought this hit instructive, for that eye cried, but the other did not; which shows that I was a scientist by nature and could have learned vivisection. I have since seen women who could do the same thing, metaphorically speaking, without even being struck by a spit ball. I mean they could cry with one eye while the other one winked. Incidentally, Julie Beauclerc was not one of those women; when she cried she did it from keel to truck and she vibrated like an ocean greyhound.

Julie was a nice girl and comforting. At recess she sneaked up and whispered that she was sorry for me and Cam both, and as she said it she put a piece of peppermint candy right in my pocket. It was dirty but I did not care. I would have eaten it if it had been poisoned and I knew it. Then she said that the way Mr. Stilson ran a school did not suit her; it was wicked and if she knew anything about the way God intended such places to go, Mr. Stilson would some day get blasted up by Providence as a punishment; yes, sir, blasted up like a cottonwood stump with dynamite. Besides, Professor Stilson was a mean old, tobacco chewing sneak, anyway. I agreed with her. Of later years I have resented Professor Stilson's harshness less; but I have resented more the systematic efforts he contrived to make to keep us all in ignorance. Not that it matters, how-

ever. I only mean that he strangled interest in every subject he taught.

I agreed heartily, in fact, with everything Julie said, for old Jim kept me in that corner during all of recess and, for that matter, for all the forenoon, too. It was mighty hard because I knew what was going forward outside during recess. Frequently I heard Sandy's voice raised in lament or abuse. He and Cam were evidently preparing to fight by having Sandy talk a lot. That was just as necessary to Sandy as priming is to an old-fashioned wooden pump. He always was that way and still is. But Cam was a new force pump, ready when you are. Once I heard what Sandy said.

" Some of these new kids think they're so all fired smart, coming out here from Massachusetts with pin-toed shoes, but, by chicken-berry, I'll show some of 'em." " Chicken-berry " was Sandy's favourite oath but it was only used on great occasions. He had invented it himself and never hoped to invent another and never did.

I did not hear any more just then, for Professor Stilson fell asleep in his chair at this stage and started to snore so loudly right alongside me that I could not hear anything else. I had not heard Cam say a word, which was perfectly natural, as natural as it was to hear Sandy talk, for Cam always saved his words and when he did speak his tones were mild and calm and gentle. But don't make the mistake of supposing that his speech was innocuous. On the contrary, such words as he uttered were likely to be the most tantalising, the most tormenting and devilish that could be invented. I knew just how he was

looking; not a trace of temper, his eyes off towards nowhere and his remarks as caustic as lye. This trait he also kept when he grew up.

After a few minutes, Professor Stilson got his windpipe into a straighter line and quieted down. Then I heard little Julie Beauclerc's voice raised.

"Sandy Rusher," she called out, "you are a great big bully, so you are, and I'd pull your nose myself for a rose-hip. You ought to be ashamed, so you ought, you great big booby, to pick on a new boy." I snickered at the idea of Cam being bullied.

Just then Professor Stilson, waking with a jerk and a choking gasp, opened his eyes, picked up an old copy of the *Stage Reporter,* which had fallen from his pocket, and putting it back bawled out in a loud, reverberating voice:

"Recess is over!"

I was glad it was over because I'd have hated to have that fight pulled off with me in the corner not able to see a thing. In fact, I just could not have stood it. I should have sneaked out. Besides, it was lonesome standing in the corner of an empty room.

At noon, after I got out of the corner, I went down to the edge of the creek with Cam and the lunch basket, as he said he had enough to eat for two. We crawled under a high bank and spread the stuff out. That was a good lunch and we were having a fine time eating and telling how we should like to kill Professor Jim Stilson by lashing him atop of a red ant hill and having him eaten up by degrees (which shows that we all have savage ancestors and that almost any of us could plan the Inquisition if he gave

it his undivided attention) when Sandy came swaggering down as if by accident with three of his holders on, short, swart Sam Taylor amongst them. Sandy had his hat pulled over one eye and from time to time he contracted the muscles of his arm to show how strong he was. I suppose his biceps at that time was about the size and colour of an oyster, but think how little the biceps of John L. Sullivan would look if you stood off a mile to examine it. It really was not so funny as you might think. It looked big to me. When he got in front of Cam, he dragged one toe in the dust and said belligerently,

" Mebbe some of these new red-headed kids from Massachusetts that are sporting around here are *man* enough to cross that line. Mebbe they dare, which I don't believe."

Cam looked at the line and at Sandy and did not get the least bit excited. He winked at me cheerfully, got up, calmly wiped some of the jam off his chin, then walked deliberately over and crossed the line and then, to make a thorough job, stooped down and spit on it, which was the most comprehensive way of taking a dare ever introduced into the Palouse Country. Most boys could not have conceived of such an insolent acceptance nor have executed it so promptly. Like Sandy, they would have needed to talk up their determination to the sticking point.

" I dare you to do it again," said Sandy, fiercer than ever, his ridiculous biceps all contracted, ready to burst.

Cam did it again and I began to be worried for fear Sandy would not fight at all in spite of his being

twice as large as Cam, who did not seem to care whether he fought or did not fight or whether he went swimming, which we had talked about doing. Sandy's gang kept urging him on, however, particularly Sam Taylor, and finally Sandy put a chip on his shoulder and said he would "poke the snoot" of any "kid" that touched it and besides "butt him in the belly" with his head, and he told how hard his head was: "as hard as a diamond," he said. It was hard and is, but he does not boast of it now, which shows that it was not, after all, perfectly hard.

Cam sent the chip spinning and, as all the previous talk had really made Sandy feel brave, he hit at Cam. Sandy was quite a fighter when he had inflated his own courage by talk and afterwards, too, if he had plenty of people to keep cheering him on. But after the cheering dies, his courage dies: does to this day. Cam was the opposite and still is.

Sandy was intoxicated with his own bravery when he struck at Cam, but he did not hit him even then. Cam was somewhere else when the blow arrived. And then Cam became a streak in the air, he went at Sandy like a wild cat. He looked as though he had turned to fire and as though five minutes would burn him out. Sandy was bewildered but he was the bigger and stronger of the two and after a time he got his weight going. And he fought well, too, for the cheering had not stopped. He put Cam on the ground and sat on him and pounded him and pulled his hair. But Cam did not say a word, he just squirmed and kicked and kept Sandy busy. I knew he was all right.

"Say 'nuff!" Sandy kept demanding breathlessly

and hopefully. Cam did not say anything. He paid no attention at all and every five seconds he would squirm and nearly throw Sandy off. Sandy was working twice as hard as Cam. It went on that way a long time. We had never seen such a long fight and the boys yelled and screamed, for they thought Cam was whipped. I knew better: I had experienced nearly the same things from Cam myself. He was just warming up.

When the fight had been going on about fifteen minutes, little Julie Beauclerc appeared on the bank above and, when she saw what was happening, she got angrier than any girl I have ever seen. She looked fiery all over, like Cam when he turned loose. It would be terrible to get that angry on a hot day, I thought.

"Sandy Rusher," she screamed, "you great big, over-grown, small-nosed bully! Ain't you ashamed? Pick on somebody your own size; leave Cam Clarke alone!" She actually started down to take part in the fight, but I grabbed her and pulled her away and whispered to her so no one else could hear.

"Don't you be afraid none, Julie," I said; "why, Cam Clarke has the toughest hair you ever saw. I know, because I tried pulling it myself the other day and I tired myself out pulling at it and I didn't make no more impression than a rabbit. It never feazed him at all. You just wait. The first thing I knew I was all tired out and Cam just got up and pounded me good and he'll do it to Sandy, too. Sandy can't breathe hardly now, he's so out of wind; yes, sir!"

I am under the impression that, as I held fast to Julie to impart this comforting information, she

scratched me and bit me. But I did not care and Julie seemed really to absorb the information, for she omitted to descend the little bank and participate. Nevertheless, she continued to address her torrent of vituperative language to Sandy and it worried and discouraged him. It was like reducing the volume of his cheers.

But Sandy kept on pulling Cam's hair and industriously pounding his back until a peal of old Jim's voice announced that it was school time. Jim was impatient of tardiness, so every one ran into the schoolhouse except Cam, Sandy, Julie and me. Sandy would have run, too, but he was afraid to run — also, when his gang departed, he was afraid to stay. As for Julie and me, we had enlisted for the war. We would see the finish or die.

By this time I could see by Sandy's face that he was growing sicker and sicker of fighting, just as he always does when the cheering falters. Cam saw it, too, and he told me afterwards that he had waited for just that thing, and I believe it. He was as cunning as he was resolute and he could be patient when no other quality would serve.

Suddenly Cam gave a little squirm and apparently without much effort rolled Sandy off. And then he went after Sandy at some speed. He was all turned to fire again: he made Sandy's nose bleed, he blacked his eye, and he hit him ten places with strokes that sounded almost like the clatter of an electric buzzer. Sandy was totally bewildered and I do not blame him. He lowered his head and bawling like a calf ran to the schoolhouse, Cam following him, kicking at him every step. Mr. Skookum Jones and Mr.

Bob Dalton, who were riding by on their cayuses, saw the procession, a small boy chasing a larger one who was bellowing, Julie and me in the wake, and they laughed until I thought they would fall from their saddles. Afterwards I heard Mr. Skookum Jones remark, as he chewed the stub of a burned out cigar, " Gents, I tell you it was like a hornet chasing a hawk — which is a sight I ain't ever seen in nature, but I have seen it in the human family. Which shows that nothing is more marvellous than anything else." Sandy was so frightened that he ran into the school house and up to the teacher's desk. The pupils all laughed, but Professor Jim Stilson did not laugh. He never laughed at anything, so far as I know. But he gathered us all together when we came in and stood us in a row on the rostrum. Then he let Julie go sit down because I said I held her and made her late. She said I lied, but the old fellow, like every one else, had a soft place for her and he pretended to believe me. But the other three of us, Sandy and Cam and me, he took in rotation and thrashed. Sandy got off easy because he bellowed so loud. Cam got a hard thrashing because he would not cry at all, and, for the same reason, I, too, received a good portion. Then Professor Jim gave me something separate and extra because he said I was a " hard nut " and was the bottom cause of it all. That was a good guess but wrong. Poor little Julie cried on account of Cam's licking, then on account of mine and then a second time on my account. Oh, it was a good afternoon's crying and we appreciated it a lot and told her so after school. She said we were welcome and that she thought Cam was the noblest

fellow alive and that I was next, if my clothes *were* ragged, which clothes she had never previously liked. These remarks made us feel splendid.

After we had talked with Julie a little while, we ran down to the mud hole and went swimming and we killed a mud turtle which was lying around carelessly on a pole. Then on the way home, as we came around by the side of Granite Butte, we saw a little baby coyote at the door of his den and as his mother was not around we followed him in and crawled back to the tip end of the den, which smelled awfully bad, and captured him. We brought him home to Sarah Clarke. She nearly died laughing and she kissed us both, but she said the young coyote did not smell very good although he was cunning, so we tied him in the back yard to a young quaking asp tree. Next morning the coyote was gone. Sarah Clarke said it had chewed the rope in two. I should have believed her, if I had not seen a piece of manila jammed in the throat of her scissors. But I do not blame her; coyotes do smell bad and he was better off with his mother on Granite Butte.

That first day at school had been one of glory for Cam and me. I remember it so minutely and I describe it so in detail because it was his fight with Sandy that made Cam the oracle and leader for all Washtucna boys. Occasionally afterwards some boy rebelled but Cam was leader as long as he stayed in Washtucna. And it was an important day for me. It was the one in which I decided that the pleasures of school were worth the pains. Always afterwards I took an interest in being educated and while I could I attended school regularly. But that

was not long, so there is considerable misinformation which I have never received. I have acquired my education principally from circumstances.

I remember another important thing, a symptom of the times. As I walked home with Cam, Doctor Punts was just leaving Mrs. Clarke's house. He stopped when he met us and looked at us a long time, sort of friendly and gently, then he twisted his long beard in his bony hand and snarled, but just the same his voice sounded pleasant.

" I hope you boys," said he, " won't be any rottener to Mrs. Clarke than is absolutely necessary for a boy to be, an' that's bad enough. I dunno as a boy rates havin' as good a ma as she is — and if I can do anything you make her tell me. Savvy? "

" Thank you, sir," said Cam, and Punts strode along, head down and buried in thought.

When we got to the house, we told Sarah Clarke what Punts had said. Her mottled eyes grew misty. " People are kind," she said softly, "— and sometimes I think they are kinder here than any place. But they do not understand entirely."

CHAPTER VII

THE month of June was lively for Washtucna. The railroad appeared on the horizon and all hands came on deck to see it arrive, and, having come up, they stayed up. The town fell into a sort of fever. The grading crews started early in the month and thenceforth business was done on a rush basis: coming, coming, coming; surveyors, graders, track-layers, new saloons, gamblers, new earnest settlers, gay-painted women: one, two, three. The whole Palouse Country was filling up that spring; men came like an army of ants or a pest of locusts. Never since has that country seen such a fierce outburst, such flowings forth and back, such frenzied digging and building. I know, for I have seen all the booms since the beginning. Latterly we have moved more slowly, try as hard as we would to move fast. And we have always tried hard, for we are all still of booster habits of mind and we like to swagger and cheer and rush on.

Washtucna, in particular, swelled tremendously in population. Town lots were staked over the whole little valley. Old Jimmy Day suddenly fancied himself to be a prince or an Indian nabob, so fast did they trade him money for the plots of land which he laid off on his boggy flat. The stages came in crowded, emigrant wagons arrived with flapping wagon sheets, buckboards and pack horses and men

carrying their packs on their backs appeared. They slept in sheds and shacks, in tents and under the white stars of God's heavens. They were here and there like fleas: they started all descriptions of industry, placer-mining and oil-boring, which extravagantly failed; truck-farming and saloon-keeping, which as extravagantly succeeded; and then hotel-keeping and wheat raising and all the multifarious activities whereby men feed and clothe and entertain each other and grow rich and die.

Naturally, the activities already established grew beyond credibility. Jan Havland's bar-room was crowded day and night, the feud between Saints and Sinners bubbled like boiling water, Tom Harris's mare even foaled twin colts and my father had so many dusty pairs of shoes to re-sole or mend that he hired an assistant and decreased his own liquor consumption.

Among the new enterprises were a Chinese laundry and a rival saloon to Jan Havland's. But trouble grew faster than any other business and occupied more stalls for its transactions. People acquired a shocking habit of punctuating their statements with revolver shots and others indulged freely in fists and clubs and knives. These altercations were not, however, without their advantages. Many undesirable citizens got themselves killed outright, while from the living remainder Doctor Punts was able to extract an income from the tending of wounds.

Sarah Clarke's business grew as rapidly as any one's. There was sent to her an extraordinary quantity of men's clothing to be repaired, and the quality

was as extraordinary as the quantity. Men developed an uncontrollable, incurable habit of tearing clothes that had never been worn and of tearing clothes over and over again. Mrs. Clarke used to smile at first, but after a while she refused the more obviously fraudulent work — and then she would privately cry over it.

Probably it was Gunnysack Charlie who reached the height of ridiculousness in repairs when he brought forth a brand new broadcloth coat with a snag in the tail of it. Everybody knew that Gunnysack had never in good faith owned, much less worn, any new garment. Even Sarah Clarke knew it and when she refused to touch it, a great shout of laughter went up from Washtucna — a laughter tempered with a certain fondness and gentleness and forbearance, even with tears.

Thereupon Gunnysack, who was visiting Mr. Skookum Jones, got himself feverishly drunk day after day, and late at night he and Skookum Jones, who would have his battered silk hat in his hand, might be seen riding crazy races towards home over the bright, star-lighted, shining hills. Sarah Clarke attributed this remarkable defection from virtue to the disease of activity which had swept over the country and did not in the least guess the trivial cause of it.

Strangely enough, dry-boned, dry-worded old Mr. Beauclerc felt the fever of activity also. He preached long sermons of brotherly love, went gunning for Sinners and got himself accused of " slick-earing" thirty head of Judge Rusher's cattle on the previous round-up. Finally, as president of the

" Cattlemen's Association," he arranged for a great bucking match. But the bucking contest broke loose from him and got itself held on Sunday to his everlasting scandal and he refused to attend.

The first of the big gang of railroad men to arrive on the job were the graders. Some were Mormons, who had been brought from Utah to the Northwest for this work. As workers they were unexcelled, except by Chinamen. But they were accompanied by men whose habits were careless and violent and disquieting. All day long they worked under the clanking steam shovels or followed the great wheel scrapers, and all night long they murdered each other and gambled and drank whisky. You can not procure such disorders from any races of men but north Europeans, such determined, persistent, long-indulged, deep-throated, barbarous hilarity.

Presently the graders were gone, leaving the tracklayers to console us. That was different. They seemed to take no recess from work. Cam and I used to watch for hours the bending fires that never died except when a new one, farther along, was born. How musical I thought the clang of a dropping rail! And the skill of the spike drivers! We watched breathlessly their tireless, never ceasing strokes. I remember one night on which, after long standing by the fires, I went home to bed and heard faintly through my slumber a chorus of coyote voices keeping accompaniment to the clangorous pounding of the bending gang. Even in my sleep it affected me curiously, I dimly felt that it was outlandish, it was somewhat as though a brontosaurus had gone lumbering down Broadway. And at the same time I could hear

the dry wind whine over the bunch grass and I felt depressed — or dreamed that I did.

After that settlers came in faster than ever, a hundred mules and horses were hauling sand and lumber and lime and the sounds of building continued often far into the night. Busiest of all was William Hoefner, the smith. I have seen him late at night still standing by his forge working the great hand bellows and in the first grey of dawn I have wakened to see his wife and him swinging their sledges valiantly in the heart of a steam cloud which arose from a shrinking wagon tire.

Amidst such activity and such sounds of activity blossomed Washtucna's first boom. What Sarah Clarke thought or felt about it all I could not guess. She used to look at it wide eyed; she saw all of it or none of it, I could not say which. She sewed constantly at her pile of clothing — it was a strange piece of mockery that she, of all women, should live by mending purposely torn clothing for rough frontiersmen, perhaps even for renegades and horse thieves. She, I suppose, saw the irony of it, but she only smiled with her flickering eyes and sewed on. Sometimes, dressed all in black, as she then was, with her thin, hollowed face and her large luminous eyes she looked like a priestess or a prophetess, and she even spoke as one. "The Palouse Country, like the seven small fishes, shall feed a multitude," she said once. And this has proved true. There is mile on mile of wheat and orchard and garden.

Washtucna seemed to whirl and eddy around this great, calm woman. It boomed while she looked at

the horizon of infinity; yet it was very conscious of her; it was, in fact, to the last man in love with her. Indeed, in these days Washtucna commenced to feel concern lest Mrs. Clarke overwork herself and damage her health or spirits. This question I heard discussed, if not with rare wisdom, at least with extraordinary interest, in Punts' office by John Bradford, Skookum Jones, Punts and Mr. Bob Dalton. Mr. Dalton, as became a younger man with small experience amongst the ladies, was at first chary of giving opinions or even of suggesting doubts. It was Mr. Skookum Jones who put the question both fairly and firmly.

" What I'd like to know, gents," said he solemnly, after violently blowing his red nose on a red silk handkerchief, " is which course is proper for that lady to pursue. I'm in large doubts that she ain't makin' a mistake to be workin' so hard. It ain't proper and I'm interested enough to express an opinion — mebbe too interested, as it's well known I admire the lady a heap."

" Sorrow," said Mr. Bradford steadily, " needs to be wiped off the board; and, as I understand it, Mrs. Clarke has her board all written over with sorrow. Now work is the great eraser —"

" Right," said Punts firmly, " right! Let it go for a while. Sure, John, that's right! By God, give the little woman a chance to do her own swimming, it's a privilege she'll appreciate better'n most. And when she's clear of things, we'll give her a hand — we can not do anything now. If she wants work, give it to her, by God, gents! " And he leered like

Satan but his eyes were like Savonarola's. I say this with determination, although I never saw Savonarola's eyes.

Mr. Skookum Jones admitted himself as satisfied and Mr. Bob Dalton mildly showed his approval of the conclusion by explaining how he once cured the grief of a pack train of horses when a mouse mule, which had been trained to lead them, was killed by a cougar. The pack train, we were informed, refused in the absence of said mule to ford the Kaw River, until Mr. Bob Dalton ingeniously drew the girths extra tight, whereupon they forgot other troubles and proceeded happily forward. This, he assured his fellow deliberators, was a similar case to Mrs. Clarke's, the girths being the work; and he was surprised and grieved at Mr. Skookum Jones's refusal to receive it as such. Nevertheless, Mr. Dalton's approval was pleasing, as it made the opinion unanimous. Sarah Clarke continued to work.

As for Cam, he and I were always together and I found him always surprising; for a boy can be as surprising to boys as a man to men. He would fall into a half dozing, half thoughtful condition and wake from it suddenly with the most startling plans. And the strange part of that was that the plans would work. He could invent you a new method of fishing while you waited. And he was likable, infinitely likable.

CHAPTER VIII

I ONCE read that man had progressed farther in fifteen minutes since he began to make accurate records of what he had already accomplished, than previously in fifteen years. That is a guess statement by a man who has thought about it for a few minutes. It is of course a wrong guess but it imparts an idea he had in mind. If he guessed even anywhere near right, Washtucna should regard that day as epochal which saw established its first public, open-to-the-world record, its first newspaper, *The Washtucna Breeze.* I say this not because *The Breeze* was an accurate record — its worst enemies never said it was that dull — but because it was at least a record of some sort.

The *Breeze,* like Minerva, was born full-armed and, more, it had full grown teeth. It arrived on a flat car on the morning of the eighth of July and it immediately started to bite with its large, sharp teeth. Its arrival was a great triumph for that faction of Washtucnans known as the Sinners. But the triumph was temporary, for the Saints shortly afterwards started *The Washtucna Sun,* which was just as inaccurate and just as entertaining as *The Breeze.*

The editors of these rival papers spent most of that summer in composing editorials threatening each other with death, imprisonment, disgrace and assault and battery. Washtucna consequently was seldom

thereafter afflicted with a dull moment and these two papers were universally held to be of greatest public utility. For what is more highly utilitarian than amusement?

It was red-faced Judge Rusher, the leader of the Sinners, who personally succeeded by hocus-pocus and good management in launching *The Breeze,* full blown into the newspaper world. " The whole shee-bang," said the Judge, recounting his triumph, " the whole of it, editor, machinery, printer's devil and two dirty roller towels, were foaled by that flat car on the eighth day of July, plum early in the morn," and he smoked his corn cob pipe reflectively and tossed off a glass of rye whisky mixed with hot water and lemon juice.

The arrival of *The Breeze* was to most people unexpected almost to the last moment. Its apparatus on the above mentioned flat car was hauled in from Spokane at the tail end of a gravel train. Judge Rusher of course knew it was coming, he had found that out by paying the freight; but he had kept it all a secret until the evening before it arrived. In the very last hours, however, he had hastily gathered together Sinners from everywhere and he even sent by messenger to Colfax for a brass band of nine pieces, " to harmonise the noises of jubilation."

When the gravel train rolled into Washtucna, the band and the Sinners, all stimulated by pride and excitement and some by rum from Jan Havland's, were there. The band lay back in the seats of the buckboards which had brought them from Colfax and blared joyfully while the Sinners hurrahed and cheered and fired their revolvers with such reckless

enthusiasm that disinterested spectators of judgment got behind buildings. Amongst these spectators were Sarah Clarke and John Bradford. But Cam and I had no judgment, we had to be in the heart of the crowd. So we ran away and went there. Sarah Clarke must have been interested either in the celebration or in John Bradford, for she did not miss us at once.

The train was no sooner stopped than Mr. Tate Long, the consumptive editor, started the foot press and, before the car could be switched onto a siding, Cam and I, acting as newsboys, had sold the first edition of *The Washtucna Breeze* at a dollar apiece. At that price Mr. Long would doubtless have been glad to increase the number of copies, but he ran out of paper and twenty-five sheets were all he could produce. Our commission as newsboys was the munificent sum of six bits each, which great sum probably made Cam Clarke, afterwards to be so rich, feel wealthier than ever he did later in life.

In the meantime, such Saints as had been dejected observers of these hilarious proceedings from around the corners of buildings, gathered forlornly down in the stock yards. And sitting on the top rail thereof they condoled with each other and guessed at the weights of steers. Gradually as they talked their faces lighted up, the idea of a rival paper, *The Washtucna Sun,* was born and the idea was applauded.

The Sinners also adjourned to another place, but for quite different reasons. They gathered in Jan Havland's to read the first editorials, and for reasons of hospitality they brought along Mr. Tate Long, the editor, and poured as much liquor into him

as he would take — and Mr. Long would take all he could. Mr. Long was a hero: he stayed by the bar until his slightly ailing stomach gave out and then he gave out, too, and lay down under the pool table and fell asleep. His hosts picked him up and carried him gently to the Tennessee Hotel, where they put him to bed in the bridal chamber, and then themselves returned to the editorials and to further celebration.

The principal interests of *The Breeze* were undoubtedly editorial, since there was nothing in the first edition but an editorial and the advertisements of three patent medicines. The paper was the authentic mouth piece of the Sinners. What *The Breeze* said was what Sinners would think, no matter what it happened to say. Judge Rusher, indeed, was believed to write the editorials himself and I think he did so when he felt energetic. *The Breeze,* hence, was infallible when the Judge felt well. At other times Mr. Long did his best. The first edition was plainly from the Judge's pen: not only was it in his style, but Cam and I from our points of observation just outside the back door saw him modestly withdraw to the front sidewalk when Mr. Pete Barker commenced reading aloud. I write below what he read, for, as I once lived for some months of winter in a shack partially papered with one of the immortal twenty-five first copies of *The Breeze,* I am able to write the whole composition from memory. I might have memorised "Hamlet" instead, but at that time my tastes did not lie that way.

"Citizens of Washtucna," the voice read, "your *Breeze* herewith blows its first blast. *The Breeze*

does believe and *will* believe in your future. It desires to be of you and with you and it is determined to serve you. Without a doubt Washtucna will be a great city. *The Breeze* wishes to be a worthy inhabitant of such a city. Washtucna has a great work to do; *The Breeze* will help it. If Washtucna falters *The Breeze* will support it; if it deviate from the path of virtue, *The Breeze* will chastise it. Washtucna must also doubtless become wealthy, but *The Breeze* cares less for wealth than for the privilege of keeping unsullied your now unsullied name.

" We need not point out that neither money nor personal influence ever shall corrupt *The Breeze.* We shall keep ourselves as immaculate as we shall strive to keep Washtucna.

" *The Breeze* will not be an idle talker of words. It knows you and itself. It already has grasped firmly your local conditions. It knows what indignity your noblest citizens have suffered from the craven hands of its worst. *The Breeze* as it contemplates the condition chokes with indignation — but it will be moderate. It will not call in abuse to punish those hypocritical, lying, thieving, cowardly sons of ill bred female dogs who, banded together under the ironical title of ' Saints,' would by their vile machinations poison the life blood of the body politic. *The Breeze,* we say, will not abuse them; they are beneath notice.

" *The Breeze* need hardly explain after the mildness of the foregoing remarks concerning the criminal organization of Saints that it is without rancour. It is more than fair with them. Nevertheless, it is so disgusted with their putrid rottenness, by their loath-

some appearances and by their vile habits that it can conceive of but one proper method of disposing of them, which is to shove them into some bottomless hole with long poles, the poles for sanitary reasons to be cast after them.

" *The Breeze* dislikes to gratify this scum by so much mention and it dislikes a scavenger's work. But it will, nevertheless, pursue these outlaws until the sword of justice disperse them.

" Readers of *The Breeze,* we come into your midst at an important time. An artery of commerce, to be literal, a railroad, has just commenced pumping the red blood of enterprise into your veins. They will swell up. We believe they will swell up until they carry a tide like Mississippi or Clyde. Honest Washtucnans, gather around us; dishonest ones, avaunt! Let us look the world square in the face; let us cast out the vipers who lie warming themselves at our breasts. Judge Rusher and friends, we salute you! "

The Sinners had never seen any literary composition so much to their taste. They were delirious with delight by the time Mr. Pete Barker had finally stopped reading and had buried his moustache in the foam of a glass of beer. They took the papers home and read them over and over and for a week they continued to treat Mr. Tate Long with such distinguished hospitality that his next weekly issue was a day late in getting out. I should not omit to mention that during this period Mr. Long was playfully shot at by a drunken Saint, leaving town for the scene of his pastoral labours. The Sinners resented this bitterly. Wrecking the printing press would not

have been a more serious offence and they asked plaintively where was the freedom of the press if such acts of intimidation did not cease. But the Saint went unreproved by dint of departing suddenly for Canada.

The Saints, as we have seen, had at first felt discouraged when *The Breeze* came on the job. This feeling was changed to temporary enthusiasm by the meeting in the stock yards. Then, as the negotiations for the establishing of *The Sun* went forward, they became firmly hopeful and finally religiously jubilant. At first in their desperation I have heard that they talked seriously of lynching Mr. Tate Long, but this plan was not adopted. "We will let nature take its course," said some one of them, referring, no doubt, to Mr. Long's delicate lungs and his careless habits of life. But life is full of disappointments: Mr. Long remains alive to this day. He still coughs unconscionably, but so has he for thirty years, and I suspect that he may do so for yet another thirty years.

It was Mr. Beauclerc, of course, who finally and definitely, so to speak, threw his lasso over the printing press of the rival paper and dragged it down to Washtucna. He kept the galvanised telephone wire to Spokane hot with messages for a week and finally on the morning of the seventeenth of July he received a certain telegram which he sent around amongst his cohorts by courier and then he and Bob Dalton drove to Rosalia by buckboard. The purport of the message spread everywhere and the scene that followed was like a gathering of Highland clans or like the turning out of minute men. Noon was the hour of

the rendezvous and they came as at the call of fife and drum.

"There ain't nothin' secrit about it," said Mr. Tom Roberts, lighting a long black cigar. "This here *Sun* ain't goin' to sneak into town like *The Breeze* did; she comes in at high noon like a bride." Mr. Tom Roberts, I should explain, was an ambitious, loose jointed young man who wore "shaps." The Sinners firmly believed him to be a cattle-thief and said he was a natural black leg. But they would have said the same whether he was one or not.

Of course Cam and I came to the rendezvous down by the depot. We always came to everything. And every Saint in the country was there except the arch-Saints Beauclerc and Dalton. Amongst them was Mr. V. Y. Trillums, a quiet, grizzled little man with three fingers missing from his right hand. Although Mr. Trillums was as firm a Saint as he was a Republican, which is to exhaust comparison, he never came to their unimportant meetings. This, then, must have been an important meeting or Trillums would not have been there. Mr. Trillums was considered a great man in Washtucna, for in his bare little house by Dry Creek on the burned sides of Lemon Butte he was known to have in a battered hair trunk a letter signed by Abraham Lincoln. This letter certified that he had disregarded his own safety in order to look out for another person's life, and that while engaged in this class of work he had killed three or twenty-three or some such number of the enemy and had himself lost three fingers. That a man could do such things and not tell of them often afterwards was a fact pleasing to Washtucna. So Mr. Trillums was

respected and lionised by both Sinners and Saints. At the depot now he was surrounded by fifty fellow Saints.

The disinterested spectators were the neutrals and the Sinners. The Sinners took their view at a distance. The neutrals, numbering five, gathered around Mrs. Sarah Clarke, who, with Mr. John Bradford, occupied Mr. Billy Carroll's new buckboard. The five were Bradford, "Doc" Punts, Skookum Jones, Tom Warren and Mr. Gunnysack Charlie Williams. These five were distinguished by being neutrals, by being each and all bachelors and also by being individually and collectively in love with Mrs. Sarah Clarke, so much in love that they would have admired the meanest act she ever did.

The crowd at the rendezvous were hilarious but impatient, and, to while the tedium of waiting, they frequently crossed over to Jan Havland's, wherefrom they returned more hilarious yet and less patient.

At exactly noon, with a roar and a whistle, a special engine drew up with a palace freight car in tow. Mr. Beauclerc and Mr. Bob Dalton were discovered sitting on the cowcatcher with express-messenger shot guns in the bend of their arms, as though they were guarding treasure. This sight elicited immense enthusiasm. The Saints liked the sight and, besides, it was Saints' day to cry and shoot and cheer, which acts they performed forthwith, sad faced Mr. Beauclerc making deprecatory gestures the while, but enjoying it all immensely and, in spite of many years' repression, looking actually happy.

The Sun, Washtucna's second newspaper child,

was a healthy and vigorous brat. Its parents made it a point that it should exceed *The Breeze* on all scores. They cheered louder; they had the first edition ready to distribute even before the train arrived. Also they exceeded it in an unexpected way by giving away the whole first edition. "No robbing methods for *The Sun;* we give things away," cried Mr. Beauclerc, and he suited deeds to the words. The first copies went broad-cast while nine men and a California wagon moved the whole equipment into Billy Carroll's livery stable for temporary headquarters, and the rest took the new editor into Jan Havland's, where the noise of hilarity became disturbing to quiet people, if there were any. If the editor of *The Sun* could not claim to have been drunker than *The Breeze* editor, he at least drank more and talked more loudly.

Cam and I did not miss any part of anything, which is saying a good deal. We got a paper and started several times to read editorials, but diversions would be started. Once Mr. Bob Dalton, who had accumulated some liquor himself, shot out in succession the windows of the new depot, while the telegraph operator crawled under his table and tried to escape by the cracks in the floor. As he was fat he did not succeed, but he looked very funny. This performance of Mr. Dalton's, everybody, even Sinners, agreed was a very spirited one and original, and it was to some extent copied by other celebrators later in the summer. Mr. V. Y. Trillums, however, during his incumbency as marshal, discouraged the habit by shooting in the groin a man who was engaged in this laudable pastime — but that was long afterwards

and Cam and I did not even see it. People by that time were trying to become more orderly. On this day Mr. Dalton received no blame whatever.

Presently other exhilarated Saints, seven in number, lassoed the new Chinese laundryman and simultaneously and playfully almost pulled him in seven pieces. There was some criticism of this performance on the grounds of humanity, but as soon as the fact was presented that " Chinese air of a low narvous org'nisation," it was at once recognised that the Chinaman had not suffered at all. And as the performance had been highly amusing, all criticism of it was very properly dropped. The Chinaman vindicated this view by omitting to die of his injuries. Cam and I, however, claimed credit for that, for we borrowed some horse liniment for him from Billy Carroll — without mentioning it to Mr. Carroll, I regret to say, until nine years afterwards, in Spokane, when I paid for it with interest, as Mr. Billy Carroll was then suffering from extreme poverty and wanted a loan to get supper and bed and a breakfast. On that occasion I paid him the price of several bottles of liniment, which was proper and right.

Other interesting things happened, but finally Cam and Mr. Gunnysack Charlie and I, who were neither Saints nor Sinners, adjourned to the flat plank on top of the stock yard fence and read *The Sun's* first editorial, Mr. Gunnysack elaborating and explaining things.

" *The Washtucna Sun,*" said the editorial, " proposes to furnish the moral and intellectual light for this town. The gentlemen of this community who

have almost universally been smothered and disgusted by the putrescent darkness exhaled by that insolent publication, the so-called 'Breeze' of Washtucna, will, we feel confident, welcome a decent and fearless news sheet — which *The Washtucna Sun* is and will be.

"*The Sun* is independent and unbiased, yet it is not unaware that a certain leader of the criminal element of this community, whom we shall call Judge R—— (we forbear from moderation and on account of his unfortunate children to mention the name of the round-bellied, whisky-soak to whom we refer), has attempted by fraud and deceit to prejudice the mind of this community against its most reliable citizens. And *The Sun* so loathes injustice and misrepresentation that it has now an actual prejudice against not only Judge R—— but also against the worm-backed editor of *The Breeze* who permits himself to be used as a vile tool of Judge R——. But *The Sun* deprecates violence. It hopes no one will shoot this contemptible man or no indignant community hang him. Like ditch water and poisonous snakes, he was created for God's purposes. He will perish in the sunlight of truth.

"*The Sun,* we have said, will be independent; it will also be idealistic. It will not desire to take part in partizan feuds. But when the honour of the community is at stake it can never remain silent. For this reason the next issue and every one thereafter will be filled with spiritual and moral carbolic acid and vitriol until the last atom of the corruption of this town shall be burned out in the bottomless cauldron of our disinterested contempt.

"Judge R——, we warn you, beware! Your cattle brand is on *The Breeze.* Let it and you seek new pastures while yet ye may, or stand such consequences as the awakened wrath of this community may produce.

"*The Washtucna Sun* will shine for Washington now and forever."

That was all there was to the editorial. Gunnysack let it melt in his mouth for five minutes of silence and then said it was splendid, as good as *The Breeze;* all nonsense, but just suited to Washtucna.

Of course any one can see that a community stimulated successively with two such doses of acid wrath would squirm with life like an eel. Washtucna did. It built six new houses a day, tents came out of the ground over night and speculation, gambling, church-building, drunkenness and hard work spread like measles in a logging camp. Everybody did something.

Cam and I enjoyed every minute of those days and so did Sarah Clarke in her own way. Nevertheless, she grew very frail and her great mottled gray eyes looked out on the world with the saddest expression imaginable. But Washtucna was always solidly behind Sarah Clarke, no matter where else divided. Saints and Sinners, men and women, all plied her with respectful kindness. And as she constantly desired to be at work, they pressed, as we have seen, the strangest assortment of mending upon her that any one ever saw, mostly brand new clothing torn by design. She, seeing this, rebelled time and again, but they persisted. So one day she made a strange,

wry, yet half laughing face and said, " No matter, it is charity anyway; " and she accepted everything but afterwards cried a little. Cam and I told her to brace up, which she did. Why she never taught school I did not know, but she gave over all thought of it apparently when mending came plentifully.

When Cam and I came home late in the afternoon of the birthday of *The Washtucna Sun,* John Bradford was talking to Sarah Clarke on her little veranda, while she sewed. He was talking slowly and puffing a short, heavy-set pipe.

" I shot the fellow dead," I heard him say very quietly, while Sarah Clarke paused, her arm extended, her mottled eyes on his face. Then she reached over and patted his arm just once, while he looked away at the sunburned hills, and then we arrived with a clamour about swimming. John Bradford went swimming with us and taught us the " swallow dive."

CHAPTER IX

WASHTUCNA, I confess, had weaknesses. In those days one of these was a cankering desire to be in fashion, another was an inability to sit still. Now she is different: she cares nothing for fashion and she is never very active; nay, to a casual observer she now seems sound asleep.

It was Washtucna's amiable weakness for fashion that led her inhabitants on the great camping hegira; or drove them, which is another way of saying the same thing. When the sweat of the labour of starting two newspapers had been wiped off the municipal brow, the restless civic eye of the place began to cast around for new enterprises and interests: water works and sewers got themselves talked about, those first necessities, saloons and restaurants, being amply provided. But presently Washtucna's attention was temporarily distracted from these utilitarian ends. A yellow haired Portland tea drummer came to town for a day, and passed around the word that the fashionable thing in New York was now to go camping — it made no difference where, just to go camping. He had recently been to New York and he said he knew, and, knowing, he wondered why Washtucna, which had such beautiful places to go to, permitted them all to remain unused. "What would not New York give for such opportunities?" he asked, and he explained just what Jay Gould would

do if he lived in Washtucna. Washtucna fell to the battery of the tea drummer's logic.

There seems to have been no good reason in her own mind why she should go camping, but what would Jay Gould think if she did not? That last argument swamped her. She decided almost unanimously to go, that she must go, that she had no choice. It made no difference that Washtucna people had mostly been camping as a business for a great part of their lives. Their future should not be prejudiced by the past. Nor would they give regard to the fact that their respective methods of life when at home in Washtucna would have been considered camping of the roughest sort by the New York men who were said to have started the vogue. Washtucna, in short, was as much a slave to fashion as a young girl and as determined as a man's wife. The various Washtucnans decided that they would go camping if they had to crawl forth to do it.

Of course camping was undertaken on partizan lines. Everything always was in Washtucna. And, of course, the question immediately arose whether more of Sinners could go than of Saints. Each party boasted beforehand and lied afterhand, so I never knew which won. Nobody, indeed, knew or wanted to know; a definite statement in the premises would have wofully cut down possible conversation. How I abhor men who stop arguments by introducing irrefutable and decisive evidence! They should be gagged and flogged. Fortunately, there are but few of these miscreants alive.

I may truthfully say that altogether half the people of Washtucna went forth to the various rivers, lakes

and hills. Every four horse team and six horse wagon and every buckboard in that region was requisitioned. Even my father went, but I did not go with him and my family. Sarah Clarke and Cam and I went with the Rushers, and my father had only ten children left to take with him. I wonder if it seemed lonesome to him. He went with an ox team and it must have been very hard work, but he was a public-spirited man and when he came back he said he had enjoyed himself vastly.

Of course, there had been competition in the matter of who should carry off the Clarkes. Indeed, that was an important point. Judge Rusher won for the Sinners by the simple expedient of asking Mrs. Clarke before other people did. This was a stroke of genius and he felt so good about it that he asked me to come, too, to entertain Cam and Sandy so they would not bother him too much. It was considered by conservative people that the judge was doing a dangerous thing in taking us three boys in one party, for three boys' minds can think of a great variety of devilment. But Judge Rusher did not worry much. A fat man can try anything. He said, " Come on, Mart! " and I came. He was pretty safe, for his nerves were armoured in rhinoceros hide. One night he took off the armour — but that was later.

Cam and Sandy and I were by that time very good friends when we were not fighting. In the few days before we left for the St. Mary's we worked in unison and harmony and gathered together a lot of camping gear that looked invaluable to us. We kept this gear hidden in a gunnysack which was stowed in the Rushers' hay mow. It consisted of samples of

smoking and chewing tobacco, an old army revolver of ancient vintage presented us by Mr. George Armbend after we caught his cayuse, which had thrown him and then had run away from him. I desire, however, to say for Armbend, who is now deceased on account of freezing received in the Tanana Valley, that he was not sober at the time he made us this handsome present. Besides these, there were in the bag some corn cob pipes and nine five-cent novels, which were given us by the first tramp that was ever known to have entered the Palouse Country. Thus, you see, we were not entirely destitute of the commoner luxuries of boyhood. And we valued them as gold.

Of course, the Beauclercs had decided to go camping, and Mr. Beauclerc, amongst others, had invited the Clarkes to go with him. But there was only one of Mrs. Clarke; she could not go with everybody. Their party, hence, consisted only of Mr. and Mrs. Beauclerc, Julie and ten or twelve poor relations from Colfax, and they lamented its dull loneliness.

Our party and the Beauclercs' took the road the same day and for the same country, the St. Mary's, sixty miles or so northeast. But we were on the road at half past three and they did not start until four.

We came through Washtucna just before four, but we were not earlier than true love. Mr. Skookum Jones galloped up alongside us on his pinto cayuse and removed his threadbare and faded silk hat several times and with great vigour towards Mrs. Clarke; and Punts and John Bradford stood ankle deep in the dust and with ferocious playfulness bade

us stand and deliver, while they threatened us with imaginary shot guns. At this Mr. Skookum Jones circled around the wagon emitting from his shrivelled and time battered body certain blood curdling yells, which, he afterwards informed us, were in exact imitation of a Cree Indian. They then bade us goodbye with expressed wishes for Mrs. Clarke's comfort, health and enjoyment, altogether out of proportion to her avoirdupois. But it has been observed by numerous philosophers, I believe, that such favours are not distributed by weight.

We had so good a start over the Beauclercs that in spite of our delay we saw them just leaving home when we were at the top of Robert's long hill. This gave us a pleasing sense of superiority which Judge Rusher, like a true sportsman, promised to maintain for us as long as his horse flesh could do it.

As we drove along through the shimmering bunch grass country, Cam and Sandy and I sat on a roll of blankets with our feet hanging over the tail-board. We were jolted and rattled and deafened and we breathed dust and perspired vastly, but we had an excellent time. Oh, it was splendid: the sun shone hotter and hotter, the judge grew very red faced and he cursed pleasantly from time to time, the women promised faithfully to choke to death on the dust and then broke the promise by a narrow margin and the horses coughed constantly with it; but Sandy and Cam and I enjoyed every minute. And so did the others, each in his own way. This was principally because they thought they were on vacation; and because they thought so, they were. That is what vacation is. You could take it in a jute fac-

tory if you knew how. It was not the kind of camping people in New York do, but it was camping — very much camping.

We kept on up and down the sharp Palouse Hills almost all day. We forded the streams between them and went shouting through mud holes and up impossibly steep places until we came to the Indian Reserve. That was different country. We entered the cool, aromatic pine forests late in the afternoon and Cam said the horses " trotted just like they do in dreams," which was a statement I could not corroborate, as I was not a good dreamer of horses. My dreams are about goats with large stomachs.

That night we camped on one of the forks of the Hangman. After supper, as we sat listening to the coyote chorus and consciously breathing the fragrant air of the pines, Sarah Clarke got out what I described as a high-falutin', Sunday-go-to-meetin' banjo, which she called a guitar. It was the first one I had ever seen and I thought its music entrancing. The lilt of it set me all aquiver and got my emotions in such flow that I wanted to cry. But of course a boy could not do that. I was willing to die for something — nay, I was determined to do so. And Sarah Clarke saw and understood — saw just with a glance of insight.

Sarah Clarke played and sang very softly for a while and then Judge Rusher and his fat, good old wife joined in and Cam and I liked the effect so well that we told the judge he could sing " almost as good " as a " nigger " we had heard down on Burnham's ranch. We had intended that for the highest compliment, too, for we had admired the coloured

man a lot. And he had been a rider as well as a singer; " he can ride straight up and spur 'em all over and never claw leather," was the way Burnham described it. But the judge did not seem to understand how complimentary we meant to be. He wanted to be called a grand opera singer or something like that.

The singing got less and less frequent, the fire fell lower and lower until the dim moonlight, which came sifting down through pine tree tops, could almost cast a shadow.

Suddenly Sarah Clarke burst out weeping and even when Cam and I told her everything was all right she kept on sobbing and sobbing. I did not understand, but that night, when we were all in bed on the ground under the stars, I heard the judge talking in low tones to his fat wife. I was sleeping very near to them, so I heard what they said.

" It's funny," said the judge, " how two horses get stuck on each other when you drive 'em together a good deal. When you separate 'em they whinny around and don't seem to know hardly what to do, they're really distressed. And durned if it don't look as though people were the same — take Mrs. Clarke, now. She can't hardly get along drivin' single."

Mrs. Rusher did not reply for a moment, but I could hear her choking down a sob, which I knew came right from her kind, big heart.

Then I suppose I became very sleepy, for I thought the pine trees began to sob in the wind and the coyotes were wailing from sorrow. I escaped all this sadness by going to sleep, and when I awoke, the

crackling of the fire and the sizzling of bacon made a very cheerful sound, the call to breakfast. And Sarah Clarke was like a sprite, all full of life and light and glory, but, oh, so fragile looking.

CHAPTER X

AFTER having travelled all of another day, but now on dustless roads, we arrived up towards the headwaters of the limpid St. Mary's in northern Idaho and went into permanent camp in a little meadow set down amongst craggy, evergreen clad mountains. It was wilderness almost untouched.

Next day, while the judge and the ladies "lazed" around camp and boiled beans and played domestic games such as seven-up and California jack, Cam and Sandy and I started our own enterprises. First we fished for trout and caught some, but afterwards we heard from a prospector, who was passing along the wagon trail headed for Seven Devils, that the Beauclercs were camped in a meadow two miles below; so we went down to see little Julie, who was the only small "kid" in their party. This prospector also imparted to us the information that asafetida had an odour peculiarly attractive to trout and he advised us to carry some in our bait box. I took his advice and I suppose it cost me friends, but I forgave him.

When we found Julie, she had just discovered that she was a captive princess waiting to be rescued. We liked that for it made us remember that we were knights, which we had forgotten for several days. We told her about it and promised we would come

down to rescue her next morning after we came back from fishing, providing nothing happened. In the meantime, we advised her not to worry, and commanded her not to eat anything outside meal time except bread, water and cake. This precaution was taken, said Cam, to prevent her being poisoned. "And, besides," said Sandy, who had no imagination, "she might forget she was a captive if she didn't have nothing to 'mind her of it." Which statement disgusted Cam, so Sandy took it back.

As we moved away, Julie got behind a wagon-wheel, of which she said the spokes were prison bars, and from between these bars she waved a handkerchief at us in farewell. The last we heard she was calling upon us as true knights not to forget.

We started back towards our own camp, engaged in nothing at all. Just before we arrived, we passed through a heavily wooded, deep, dark gulch, into which the sun almost never shone. There was a clear creek wiggle-waggling forth and back across the floor of it, which was carpeted with needles and moss. Cam stopped and said he had decided that this was just the place to bring the revolver and the tobacco, for we were smugglers in addition to being knights and professional rescuers of lady captives, and this was a fine place for smugglers, the very best place imaginable.

Sandy and I were surprised and I said I did not believe a fellow could be all those things at once. Cam asked scornfully where I had ever seen any knights or smugglers or rescuers, anyway, and said I had better shut up. I admitted that he was right, that I had never seen such things; but I said I would

not shut up. I did, however, and Cam grunted like people do on the stage, and I concluded that Worcester, Massachusetts, must be a livelier place than I had hitherto believed, if smugglers and knights lived in it.

We sneaked down to camp, secured the revolver and tobacco from the sack, and ran back to the gulch. Some distance up in it behind a big rock we started a fire and then we got out the revolver and tried to shoot it for a long time. It would not fire, but after we had given up, Sandy shot it accidentally and the bullet skinned the calf of his leg and made a hole in the ground you could put your hand in. We were all frightened, especially Sandy, who thought he was killed and wanted his mother. But Cam sucked the little skinned place just as you do for a rattlesnake bite, and that made Sandy feel so important that he actually laughed and said he was glad he had been shot. Afterwards he practised limping.

Well, we did not fool with the revolver any more. We put it on a rotten log away over by itself. But we lighted up our pipes, which almost choked us, and we were starting to make plans for rescuing the princess without the revolver, when I noticed that Sandy had commenced to turn pale and that Cam had, too.

I said, "What's matter, fellers?" and I felt squeamish myself.

Cam said, "The durn world's whirlin' round like a pin-wheel 'n I'm sick," and he lay down and would not say a single word more.

Sandy and I got as sick as Cam did. We could not, I regret to admit, keep down our dinners or our

presence of mind or anything. I thought we were going to die. Just when we were sickest, I heard a rustling behind me in the leaves. I managed to look around after a long while and there was Judge Rusher, looking as stern as a fat, jolly man can look. We paid no attention to him, we just shut our eyes and went ahead dying. We were not going to be interfered with on the dying schedule, we had no time for complaints.

The judge sat down and waited. When we could move, he made us throw all the tobacco in the fire — "Damn rotten stuff!" said he, severely puffing his own pipe. Then he took the revolver and tried to put it in his pocket, but it was too big, so he carried it.

Judge Rusher said almost nothing, but he eventually made us all march back to camp single file and cut wood in the sun for two hours on empty stomachs without ever saying a word to each other. And he watched us with one canny gray eye to see that we executed the sentence. It was very discouraging to smoking, so discouraging that I did not try it again for two weeks. I suppose if you killed a boy he would give up smoking for good — but who knows?

I took no interest in things at all by the time I had finished cutting the wood. I did not even care about the captive princess. And as Sandy felt the same way, he and I bolted a barrel of supper and crawled off to bed. Not so Cam. In about an hour he woke us up and lighted a candle in our little tent.

"How's this," he whispered hoarsely, "for a letter to the Princess Julie? We'll take it to her tonight."

" Princess:

" Your faithful nights have had heeps of truble. Be not discurriged. We will nock three times on a holler tree trunk and then whistle. Trust nobudy.

" S. C. M."

The signature, he informed us, stood jointly for Sandy, Cam and Mart.

" What you goin' to do with it? " I asked sleepily, and quite without enthusiasm.

" Sh — ! " cautioned Cam, " the tent walls have ears like a mule deer. I'm agoin' to stick it through the prison bars to the Princess Julie. Are you a true knight or ain't you? Come on! "

Sandy and I agreed, having now got a little awake, that that was a good, sporty plan; so we dressed quietly, which so far as I was concerned was no complicated thing to do, and sneaked out. We called cautiously our pack of hounds, consisting of toothless Jack, Rusher's old pet dog, and trotted off down the dusty trail which the moon lighted until it was as bright as day. After we got a little way from camp it was scary, for the shadows were dark and we heard wolves and once we even heard a cougar, but we nevertheless kept on, Cam leading, until we saw the white tents of the Beauclercs' camp shining in the meadow.

We stopped to listen and to reconnoitre, as we had read that people do in such circumstances. Besides, we felt like listening. Everything was as still as a graveyard, so we slipped up into camp very quietly on our stomachs and Cam put the sheet of paper be-

tween the wagon spokes and put a stone on it and then we ran as fast as we could. This had been simple enough. But Beauclerc's dog complicated things by running after us and that dog could beat us. When he caught me, he nipped me on the bare calf of my leg. Fortunately, he did not like the taste. He quit and went home, while I kept going — oh, very much did I keep going.

When we had quieted down again to an easy walk and had reduced our hearts to suitable size, old Jack, the hound, started something on the side lines out in the brush. First there came a crashing and a delighted yelp from Jack, and then a hissing and some woful howls, then scrambling and more howling and all coming our way! We were more frightened than ever, and we stretched our legs three inches in running. We ran as only the frightened can run, and we went straight for camp and our own little white tent. Jack was behind us, yelping every step. No doubt, thought I wildly, he has stirred up seven or eight grizzly bears.

We arrived in the tent first, but Jack was on top of us instantly, whining like himself and squirming like an eel — and horrors! The odour he brought with him was suffocating, for the old fool had tackled a skunk and had got a splendid dose of its wrath. So had we! Jack brought it. He wiped himself on us and on our bedclothes and on the tent and on the ground and then he repeated.

We at length rose in a panic and drove him off with sticks, and just then little Judge Rusher walked into our midst so angry with being waked up that he cuffed

us every direction. I presume if we had not smelled so bad he would have cuffed us more and nobody could blame him. I have never seen him so angry.

Well, we actually had to burn some of our stuff in the cause of sanitation, and we had to tie Jack down by the river. By the time we were fixed for bed again we all felt ready to die. Cam and I talked it over and we decided that a boy's lot was pretty rotten these days, anyway, and we had commenced to talk a little of suicide when there came a flapping at the tent door and Sarah Clarke entered, though how she stood the odour of skunk I do not see to this day.

She kneeled down and laughed at us in a sweet sort of badinage and called us " silly boys." You should have seen us cheer up.

" You haven't had much luck to-day, have you? " she said, and then she patted us and whisked out, casting us a laughing glance over her shoulder from the door, but I fancy the fresh air tasted good to her when she got out, even if she had not mentioned skunk to us. Refraining from mentioning skunk under those circumstances was, in my opinion, the height of courtesy.

She had cheered us up a good deal and after she left we were drowsily able to speculate with pleasure on the fun we would have telling the boys at home of the adventure. We decided we would embellish — there was no virtue in us. I believe, indeed, we were going to say there were twenty skunks and three hounds; but Judge Rusher remarked to us from his tent in tones of wrath that if we did not shut up he'd skin us alive. We believed him and shut up and

then sleep took us off. If I had known the statistics on the number of boys actually skinned annually I should not have believed him so readily. But boys never do know such statistics, or parenthood would be unbearable.

CHAPTER XI

ON account of the necessity of spending a day in the river, scrubbing ourselves, our clothes and Jack, the dog, free from skunk odour, we were delayed in executing our plan to rescue the Princess Julie from the dungeon of the "Wagon-wheels." To this delay we owed the privilege of making the acquaintance of Whitey McGrath, the afterwards so celebrated horse-thief. Also, to that circumstance Julie owed it that she never did get rescued.

On the morning following the day of scrubbing, we fancied that we were ready to proceed with the rescue of Julie. Instead of going directly to Beauclerc's camp, however, Cam suggested that as a matter of strategy it was our duty to start in the opposite direction. "It'll throw 'em off the trail," said Cam decisively. We agreed with enthusiasm, but I can not now remember just what persons were expected to trail us. Still, I am sure they were shrewd, formidable people.

We took the little Flobert rifle and our lunch and started up towards the Seven Devils, saying we were hunting deer. Why the elders let us go is not entirely comprehensible to me now, but I fancy Judge Rusher decided it. His idea was to give a boy his head; and it is a good idea, too, for a fool won't last

long anyway and he might as well be killed when a boy, and a sensible person can not be hurt. If he is hurt it proves that he is not sensible.

As we went along, Cam said this arrangement suited him, as it gave him a chance to explore some new trails as well as to practise strategy and he had always intended to be an explorer, anyway. Indeed, I believe he said that he *was* an explorer. Exploring suited Sandy and me well enough, but we were not reckless explorers. We always had our eyes open for boa-constrictors and cannibals and dwarfs and frequently Sandy would lie down and crawl fifty yards on his stomach, stalking something that did not exist. It was very exhilarating. And any time we wanted to, we could change our minds, become knights and go rescue Julie. It was more than exhilarating; it was like being rich enough to own a yacht and not doing it because you preferred a career of philanthropy.

After a while we came to a little meadow with an old Indian woman kneeling out in the centre of it digging camas, which is a wild bulb that looks like an onion and tastes like nothing at all — say like rice or potatoes. It grows in wet ground and it sometimes prevents Indians from starving and it is edible if you are hungry enough.

I was going up to the woman to have a pow-wow with her, as I knew Chinook, the Indian Esperanto, pretty well — so well that I could ask where she lived and what was her name, without perspiring a bit. But Cam and Sandy said that would not do, it was too coarse; we must use strategy. We must surround and capture alive this force of savages. We

did so. Each one of us sneaked around to a different side of the meadow and then Cam yelled and we all yelled and ran at her as though she had been a cart of mince pies.

At first she showed about as much sign of emotion as would the mince pies under similar circumstances, though whether it was because we were small, or whether it was because she was an Indian, I do not know. Later she laughed and shook and gurgled like a hot spring boiling up through the mud. That made us indignant, but she persevered in this cachinnatory exercise.

When we got a look at her face, however, we were instantly mollified, for we in turn recognised her. It was old Susan who used to come to Washtucna to buy "lemon extract," which, as "she was sold," was pure fire. This she varied with stomach bitters and celery elixir. Nobody could expect Susan to be frightened, so we forgave her.

Still, I was discouraged and so was Sandy. "Shuh," said he morosely, "it ain't nobody but Susan!" Cam, however, was delighted. He cried excitedly, "By jing, this is luck! This is a friendly native, she'll be a big help as a guide all right. We gotta treat her fine so she won't leave the expedition. Yes, sir, treat her fine!"

With that Cam went forward as polite as you please, and gave Susan two dirty soda crackers out of his pocket. She munched them and patted our heads and gurgled and clucked as Indians do, and she and I inquired all about each other's families and said it was splendid to hear all the good news which we imparted to each other. And then we sat in the

sun and had a long sociable silence. Indians are good company when you want to be alone.

I, however, was growing a little tired of Susan and of sitting still, and I commenced to squirm. On one of my squirms I looked over my shoulder and there I saw a man walking and staggering along the trail as though he were either drunk or sick. At first I assumed that it was sickness, as there were not many people who had foresight enough to carry sufficient rum to keep them drunk so far into the wilderness, and I wished I were a doctor. The man was leading a horse. As he came closer, I changed my diagnosis. It did not take a physician to see that it was liquor instead of sickness and that he was exceedingly drunk. I pointed silently at him and all four of us turned to look. Susan was pleased: where there was so much drunkenness there must be some liquor — perhaps a lady could beg a drink.

When he got closer, I saw it was Whitey McGrath, whom I had often seen in Washtucna, hanging around Jan Havland's saloon — not that any one wanted him there, but there was a genuine delicacy felt about ejecting him. This delicacy arose from the fact that Whitey McGrath always had two revolvers strapped to his stomach, and that Washtucnans generally believed that he was consumed with a desire to use them. In short, people were as delicate in handling him as they would have been in handling a rattlesnake. Nobody liked him, but some people, including me, were afraid of him. I saw, as he approached, that he was wearing his guns that day and I confess I was frightened a good deal and I would have preferred to leave. However, I stayed with

Cam and Susan, but Sandy did run. He dodged into the brush just as soon as he saw Whitey. I stayed behind because Cam did, and Cam stayed because he wanted to. But Sandy was wise that day, not with his brain, for he had not any, but with his instinct, which he turned loose.

As Whitey came across towards us, I saw that he had following him one of the prettiest mares I had ever seen. She was a bay with a bald face and with white feet, and her legs were as slender and strong looking as steel bars — I refer, of course, to strong, slender steel bars. She appeared gentle, but it was evident that she was high spirited. When she got pretty close she stopped and snorted, not liking the smell of Indian. Whitey jerked her and attempted to lead her along. Then with a plunge and another snort, she bowled him over, wheeled and bolted.

Whitey got up slowly, swearing constantly as he did so. We sat still. He came over towards us. "Susan," he said, "by G-god, I gotch a m-mind to ki-ill you — thash right! An' mebbe some o' thesh boysh, too — yas, sir!"

I regretted keenly at this stage that I had not followed Sandy, but Cam and Susan seemed satisfied. Susan, indeed, was not half so much interested in Whitey's threats as she was in the possibility of getting a drink. While he promised to barbecue her, she went smilingly through his various pockets hunting for a bottle and saying to him at every motion, "*Hiu tillicums,*" which was to say, "We are great friends." Whitey seemed to like this; he looked really amiable. He chucked Susan under the chin, he said "*Hiu tillicums*" himself, and finally he told

us he would give us a quarter to catch his "cayuse" — which was not a cayuse at all, but a thoroughbred.

We caught the mare without any trouble, though it was strange that she had not cleared out for home when she found herself loose. Most horses will do this. We led her up to Whitey and Susan and this time she was either used to Susan or, being to windward, she failed to scent her. That a white man's horse or mule dislikes the odour of Indian is strange, as strange as the fact that savages sometimes dislike the odour of civilised man.

Whitey was by this time making love to Susan, but when Susan made certain that he had no "*skookum* water," she got tired, shoved him roughly away and told him to "*clatawa,*" which means to go. This remark Susan repeated with emphasis, and as she spoke picked up a piece of wood for size about like a pick-handle. Whitey, though, would not be repulsed. He ogled the old woman and smiled at her and made attempts to embrace her, which in violence were considerably out of proportion to the old lady's charms. Finally, however, he seemed to give up. He swung awkwardly into the saddle and was making off when I asked him very politely, "Where's that quarter, Mr. McGrath? You ain't forgot it, have you?"

I would not have asked him if I had known how he would feel about it. It was the wrong remark to make to him. I thought he would blow up with rage. He whirled his horse on its hind legs and rode at us, cursing every jump. We beat him to the brush and got behind a big fallen log. This he tried to hurdle, but after barking his horse's knees he gave up and

rode away. Cam and I kept quiet this time as he went, because we thought perhaps that would be about the best way to save our lives. But Whitey had not finished. He rode over towards Susan again and half fell out of his saddle and tried to embrace the old creature.

Susan, however, was out of patience with philandering unlubricated with liquor. She stepped back, swung the imitation pick-handle like a man and clouted him alongside the head. It knocked him down and I thought it had killed him, for he did not move for a long time. Susan did not seem to care. She went ahead digging camas. I did not much care myself, but I remained behind the log.

After a while Whitey got up groggily, and he acted soberer. I don't believe he knew what had happened or ever found out. He pulled up into the saddle after some effort, and, still reeling, galloped off on the beautiful bald-faced thoroughbred, headed for Seven Devils — and I never mentioned that quarter to him as we went; nor would I have mentioned it for a wagon load of quarters.

We all came back into the open, Sandy last of all, and we christened Susan " Pick-handle Sally," which name spread and became known wherever she was known. She was proud of it and finally would answer to no other name. I often wonder if Whitey McGrath ever heard what happened.

We then said we would open our package and lunch there with Susan, giving up the rescue of Julie for the day. But when we proposed this to Susan, she said, *" Halo — tinas clatawa, hiu skookum muckamuck,"* which is to say, if we would travel a

little way with her, she would lead us to some good food — not lunch, but good solid food. We said we did not care how good food we ate and we followed Susan down to the Indian camp, where she gave us some baked camas and jerked venison and we gave her two apples. We all had a good time, including Susan, but the place did smell like a glue factory. The flies were bad, too, and they were starving hungry, so we left when we could. Susan was a good squaw, but she was somewhat ignorant concerning sanitation. Indian camps, however, have their virtues: you can move them when you have made the surroundings unbearably dirty.

On the way back to camp we shot a blue jay and when we got home we had a supper of syrup and beans which we liked. Nobody died from them either. They are good food and they are either a cure for indigestion or a proof that you have not got it, or something like that.

We told Judge Rusher about our adventure with Whitey, and the judge said Whitey ought to be hanged and would be, and when he said it, he snapped his jaws together like a steel trap. That meant that he would help hang him if ever he had a chance. The judge was, you see, a man of strong opinions. Then he made us describe the horse over and over and when we got through, he wrote down a description of it, " for reference," he said. Eventually he used that reference, but that was afterwards.

As we were sitting around the camp that night, a little blear-eyed, gray bearded man rode in with two pack ponies behind him, each one tied to the tail of the horse ahead. He was a prospector just out from

Washtucna and he had a box for Mrs. Clarke, sent by "devoted friends." There was a bunch of bedraggled roses from Mr. Skookum Jones, the product, doubtless, of a Spokane greenhouse, two cans of caviar from Punts, M.D., and a letter from John Bradford.

We boys went to bed lamenting that the Princess Julie still was unrescued and Mrs. Clarke went to bed looking sad. She told Cam and me next day that it was because people were kind, which we said was no reason at all.

CHAPTER XII

WE never did rescue the Princess Julie. We went to see her next day and found she had forgotten she was in a dungeon anyway, so we discharged her as a captive princess and took her into our gang as a lady fisherman and an explorer. But her mother kept her around camp so her explorations were somewhat restricted. When we got tired of being sportsmen we became bookish and spent three days in reading our five-cent novels aloud to each other. After that it was time to start back to Washtucna. Julie had liked the novels immensely and we all wished some one would commit a crime to give us practice in detective work.

We arrived in Washtucna a week to a day after our encounter with the redoubtable Whitey McGrath. I remember so exactly because meeting McGrath had been for us boys the event of the excursion — an event even beyond being shipmates with skunk odour. We felt pretty good — wild, hilarious and full of baked beans and trout. And we were as sun tanned as an old campaign hat from the tropics. It had done us all good and the good showed even in Sarah Clarke's face, which seemed less thin and which peeled to a beautiful brown colour.

Washtucna had been busy growing and so fast she grew that our ten days' absence had been a long time

in her history. The new arrivals, indeed, were so numerous that the temporary absence of the old inhabitants had been to a remarkable degree unnoticed. And this effect was heightened by the fact that those old inhabitants who stayed at home had striven exceedingly hard to please, to talk and lie like the whole town full of us. Altogether, I doubt if we were missed. A conclusion which I shall never impart to Judge Rusher, nor, indeed, to Cam, whose weakness it has always been to fancy himself indispensable.

News met us at the door, also John Bradford and Doc Punts, who informed us in detail of the news, while later up galloped breathlessly Mr. Skookum Jones on his pinto cayuse. I need not say that I waited to hear all the details of this news instead of rushing home to the bosom of my family. This is partly to be attributed to the extreme hardness and unevenness of my family's bosom and partly to curiosity.

It appeared shortly that Mr. Jack Snell, a violent young adherent to the Sinners' party, had shot Mr. Horlacker, the editor of *The Washtucna Sun,* in the stomach, on account of a playful editorial in which Mr. Horlacker had in print adverted to Mr. Snell as a " cattle-thief and a liar." This news being imparted, Punts, Bradford and Jones withdrew to let Sarah Clarke rest, their faces as radiant as possible. Whereupon Mr. Gunnysack appeared and proceeded to recite the whole circumstances, Mrs. Clarke listening and smiling with a patience beyond belief. At this juncture I was removed home by my parent, who came up and grasped me firmly by the left ear.

Saints, it need not be remarked, were highly incensed at the shooting of Mr. Horlacker. They considered such an act a threat against the freedom of the press and they talked of lynching Mr. Snell. Sinners, on the other hand, were very well satisfied. Judge Rusher, the king Sinner, after considering the case maturely, said that on the whole he believed Mr. Horlacker had every cause to congratulate himself that his wound was from an honourable revolver shot, whereas gentlemen of Mr. Horlacker's moral standing usually reckoned for their sins ignobly, say on the end of a rope. As for threats of lynching, said lynching could only be carried out over the carcass of Judge Rusher. In the sentiments opposing lynching Judge Rusher was joined by those influential non-partizans, Mr. John Bradford, Mr. Skookum Jones and Punts, M.D. "It'll teach that Horlacker sport not to be such a violent writer," said Skookum, "and for that reason I hold the shooting justified." Punts said Horlacker would not die and that as he, Punts, had always "been a violent partizan of moderation in language and in other things," he was not in favor of any lynching business, "no matter in whose honour pulled off." Most potent of all was John Bradford, who, so far as I know, said nothing but just looked.

Mr. Beauclerc arrived back in Washtucna the same day that the judge did, and as these two were the acknowledged leaders of the belligerent parties, Saints and Sinners flowed silently into town from all the surrounding country, revolvers at belt or in bulging hip pockets. It was like a civil war on a small scale. The Tennessee Hotel was jam full that

night, and in addition men slept where they could, bivouacked on their arms on floors and sidewalks. Judge Rusher's house was a garrison, Mr. Beauclerc's was another and the women and children from each were sent out trembling to the houses of distant neighbours. Mr. Jack Snell was guarded by his fellow Sinners as though he were the Czar of Russia warned of a dynamite plot.

It was like some real wars, I say; just as ridiculous, just as inspiring. Men strode about town grimly and silently, others sat at cards or at drinking at Jan Havland's, with their hands kept free for use and their eyes looking around every which way like glass-eyed cayuse ponies looking for something at which to shy.

Of course all these men had forgotten or had never known what the war was about. And, alas, I do not now know whether the Saints were fighting for the right to call a man a cattle-thief and a liar or whether the Sinners were fighting for the privilege of shooting people who write things that do not suit your taste. And in this respect it was like war, too. And, indeed, nobody cared what the war was about: it was the irresponsible, exciting war game of healthy barbarian children, and a most interesting game it was to the participants. Even the women and children had the fun of wondering whether their relatives would be killed or not, and, though I have nowhere seen it so stated, I believed there is considerable sport for a good healthy woman in such speculations. It is good fun! Napoleon and Bismarck and Friedrich had their fun in their time, now it was the turn of the Palouse Country.

In the early morning Mr. Dan True, the marshal of Washtucna, rode sleepily into town. He was born sleepy and he never had changed. Mr. True was a Saint and an idiot and the poorest day's work Mayor Punts, M.D., ever did was to make Mr. True marshal of Washtucna. Punts was a sound man but he made a mistake.

Mr. True was away camping when word accidentally came to him up on the Indian Reserve of the shooting of Mr. Horlacker, of the disorder consequent thereto and of the promise of more disorder. Mr. True, with an entirely unexpected zeal, slung a leg over his cayuse and came down, riding all night and no doubt sleeping as he rode. He arrived very early in the morning. Mr. True, it has been remarked, was a Saint and naturally he immediately at such a crisis went to Mr. Beauclerc's house for consultation, consolation and advice. Mr. Beauclerc recommended him to pray and later advised him to arrest Mr. Snell in the name of the law for disorder and not to omit any opportunity to shoot him if he resisted or tried to escape. After having arrested Snell, Mr. Beauclerc said he thought True ought to take him to Colfax where the jail was stronger and the man's friends could not release him and where, it is said, Mr. Beauclerc believed he could be more safely kept for lynching purposes.

Mr. Dan True nodded his head sagely over this advice. Then he went home for cogitation and drank a quantity of rye whisky and afterwards sallied forth and talked over with several persons who passed at that early hour the desirability of making

the arrest above mentioned. These conversations, it need hardly be said, were repeated and Washtucna buzzed like a swarm of bees. The advice Mr. True received was various, but he paid no heed to any except Mr. Beauclerc's, which he firmly believed to be inspired.

About ten o'clock he was ready to perform the solemn ceremony of arresting Jack Snell. He walked down Steptoe Avenue followed by Cam, Sandy and me, and I confess he was perfectly calm and self-possessed. Indeed, there was no question but that Dan True was courageous, he had many opportunities to show that in his life time and he never failed. By what ingenious fabrications Cam, Sandy and I had escaped our families this day I will not recite. They were triumphs of mendacity. I doubt if I could lie better now after years of observation of certain distinguished gentlemen in this line whom I know very well.

The men of the district were all gathered in the street in the locality adjacent to the buildings occupied by Jan Havland's saloon and John Donnelly's store. Saints and Sinners were there intermixed, and in many cases there was even a rough friendliness between the warring individuals of opposite sides. Off to one side Mr. Beauclerc in his dry, husky voice was talking of the new church, while in another place Judge Rusher was teetering on his toes, blowing smoke and describing no less a horse race than the great Derby itself, which he had seen in England on a visit made when he was a boy. He had told about this race more than thirty thousand times. I know this figure is correct, for he had told it for fifty

years twice a day. In the very centre of the crowd was Jack Snell.

Cam and I were frightened but we followed Mr. Dan True. "We miss nothing," was our motto. As that gentleman entered the crowd of two hundred men, a lane leading directly to Jack Snell seemed to open up and to stay open as if by preconcert. The marshal followed steadily down this lane, his eye on Jack Snell, not deviating to right or left, for he was, as I have said, a brave, determined dolt of a man.

True was about to speak, I think, when Snell seemed to make a jerk with his hand towards his pocket — and then with startling suddenness three revolver shots came from Dan True's gun: he had shot from the hip. A tall man at the door of the saloon, Jim Lent, cried out sharply and fell down, shot in the breast. Jack Snell was unscathed but his gun and a hundred others flashed into sight. However, by the grace of God nobody else fired. Then a wild roaring murmur arose and an angry, eddying motion started. Men were taking sides and presently Judge Rusher and the Sinners were in Donnelly's store and Mr. Beauclerc and the Saints were out in front of it.

In the meantime no one paid attention to the wounded man lying at the door of Jan Havland's saloon and finally it was Cam and I who waked up Doctor Punts, who had been out late the night before helping a sick squaw on Cabbage Flat. Punts was lying snoring, mouth wide open, in his hot, dusty little room in the Tennessee Hotel. It was with difficulty that we roused him; he was almost exhausted but he made haste and came out with us half dressed.

He knelt over Jim Lent, tried his pulse, his heart and his breathing, cursing every minute. Then he stood up and glanced at the two hostile crowds, who now for the first time realised the existence of Jim Lent.

"You damn fools!" he called to them angrily in a loud voice, "ain't the mere fact of your bein' alive a sufficient reproach to God without your demonstratin' it more fully by a-shootin' people in the streets?"

Still anathematising the two crowds he knelt again, opened his leathern case of instruments, took out a scalpel, and deftly slit down the man's shirt and examined his wound. Then he stood up and pulled his long beard slowly to one side and spoke to the crowds accusingly.

"He is dead, gents!" he said quietly. "Dead already. Last night I talked with him. He was a stranger here; he was alone but he had a family back in the States which he was hunting a home for. Mebbe you-all gents would like to explain this here hospitality to his wife and children; mebbe some o' the leaders would explain to 'em that this is just Washtucna's idea of sport, that we don't mean nothing."

There was a general uneasy shuffling; Washtucna was ashamed and she found she had a conscience. Immediately all heat and murderous desire seemed to burn away. What was it all for? Every one seemed suddenly to have asked himself that question; simultaneously and as if in answer men came forward from both crowds and helped carry Jim Lent into Jan Havland's and lay him out on the pool

table with a dust robe over him. The saloon was cleared and no drinks were served.

Mr. Dan True, who had remained as isolated from both sides as the dead man, seemed now somehow to consider that his duties were finished, although the arrest had never been consummated. He walked silently home and whether from physical exhaustion, from his long period of waking or from the lingering effects of the liquor he had drunk that morning, he fell, says his wife, almost instantly asleep. And nearly every one followed the example he set in going home. In two hours the town was totally silent, seemingly abandoned, not a horse at the hitching racks, Jan Havland's doors shut, also Mr. Donnelly's. Amongst the last to go had been Jack Snell.

Next morning Jack Snell was missing from the Palouse Country, but early risers found this letter pinned to the door of Jan Havland's saloon.

"*Gents:*

"While cogitating to-night on the events of this recent past, I sees I'm a disturbing element in this district. Which I decline to be. Seeing that two gentlemen have been shot on account of me I'm decided that I'll take part in a little emigrating movement which I've long had in view. I am now, as a feller might say, tightening my cinches preparing to go. I am urged to this step in particular by the circumstances of seeing this prospective citizen, Mr. Lent, shot up, instead of me, which is some loathsome to me and unpleasant. Of course this Mr. Lent may have been a rich sport but I guess not, so I hereby

delegate Doc Punts to draw my pile from the bum safe of the Tennessee Hotel and distribute it to this Mr. Lent's outfit of kids, free gratis, of course. Likewise I have an extra saddle at Skookum Jones's, which I bequeath to Mrs. Sarah Cameron Clarke either to be sold or kept for the kid, which I hope he grows up straight and square. It cost $85.00 in Taos and is O.K. Which this is all I can do to recompense this burg for the inconveniences I've put on her by my quarrelsome luck. I regard this leaving with habitual regret as I've admired to live here and in the community which shelters this here Mrs. Clarke whom I've mentioned favourable.

" Yours,
" JOHN SNELL."

CHAPTER XIII

THE poet that guessed " there's a divinity that shapes our ends " made a bull's-eye. The Hirschlagers were, in effect, Cam's divinity; they were needed and they came. I suppose that for Cam, next to his parentage itself, they were the most potent influence on his early manhood. It was they who first gave direction to his life, who stirred his ambitions and his vast enthusiasms and who put solid stuff under him. Cam went to work with Hirschlager on the great Keokuk and St. Louis Railroad after he left school, but it was in Washtucna that they first saw each other and formed the ties that bound them until Hirschlager's tragic death, which is in every man's memory.

Hirschlager had desired, I think, to become what Cam eventually became. But he could never have accomplished it. He did not possess the inexorable will, the fervid imagination, the cool diplomacy or the almost devilishly nice understanding of motives and things; nor, indeed, could he be ruthless enough even when ruthlessness was the thing.

Cam and Hirschlager were very different. Hirschlager was large, irregular and powerful but with a certain looseness of texture. Cam's features were sharp, clear cut, yet mobile, and his eyes — there was the mystery, they were ever changing like Sarah Clarke's and like hers they now glinted fire and now

were soft as spring, while always they were utterly unreadable.

It was in August of that year that Hirschlager first came to Washtucna. He was then, though already mature in years, only Division Superintendent of the Palouse Northern Railway. His remarkable rise in railroad circles came later, his faculties had matured late. He was at that time making a journey of inspection over the new Palouse line in his private car *Kootenai.* He had come from Spokane to Washtucna over a fully completed line, and Washtucna was gathered together to greet him with hilarious enthusiasm, with revolver shots and a barbarian banquet at the Tennessee Restaurant and Hotel. This was a memorable banquet to Washtucnans. Doctor Punts, being a non-partizan and being, according to common judgment, "some eloquent," was elected to preside; which he did, I believe, with vigour and some dignity.

This banquet was naturally considered a great event. All of the genteel and many of the barbarous were there. In short, it was a perfectly characteristic gathering and it was intensely enthusiastic and optimistic.

But Cam and I soon lost interest in the banquet and early left off peeping in at the windows, for there seemed no immediate prospect of getting any of the fancy food on which the diners regaled themselves. We decided it would be better to go have a look at the private car *Kootenai,* the like of which had never before come to Washtucna, although Cam assured me that they were common in Worcester, Massachusetts. We went accordingly and examined the *Kootenai*

with care. We crawled under the rods and over the brake beams and when we came out we made critical remarks. Then we talked to Hirschlager's Chinese cook and Cam by diplomacy and craft got him to take us into his kitchen. While we ate crackers and satisfied our curiosity by examining everything, the Chinaman inquired with a great deal of interest if people in Washtucna killed Chinamen frequently. We were able to assure him that they never inflicted any but "the milder tortures," whereupon he was greatly comforted. He then informed us with trepidation that Wardner people had distinguished themselves by "klil all China boys." Under these circumstances he was curious to know in how many other places people aspired to the same distinction. I told him not to worry, that the people of Washtucna had not discovered that amusement.

We were about leaving when a woman's voice called from the magic regions at the other end of the car, the regions of power and luxury and ineffable glory.

"Sing!" called the voice, a very musical one.

Sing clapped off in his slippers, making a noise like a boy walking on shingles. We waited.

"Leddy say bling 'em in boy," said Sing, suddenly putting his head in at the door of the tiny kitchen.

I started to leave. I did not want to be brought. Like a good Palouser I wanted to take to the bunch grass, but Cam said no. I was terribly embarrassed, not to say frightened, when he said no, for I saw that he meant it. I did not know but that you ought to walk into a car like that on your hands out of re-

spect for it. What was a fellow to do anyway? Cam said, "Shuh! Mart, you don't seem to savvy how people do these things; you just do what I do and follow me. I'll show you." With that he walked in as polite and self-possessed and as modest looking as a sheep in a hay stack.

I followed and I decided instantly that Mrs. Hirschlager was almost as agreeable as Sarah Clarke. I had taken but one good look at her when I felt perfectly at home. She was very pretty, dark and slender, and there was something really like Sarah Clarke about her: that was breeding, but I did not know it for many years. To me she just looked indescribably elegant as she leaned back at ease in a great arm chair, gowned in some soft, rich, but very plainly made gown.

"I'm not very fond of banquets," she said confidentially, "and when we came into town I hid, so I escaped going. I'm a regular stowaway. But you won't tell Washtucna people, will you?" And then mockingly and coquettishly, "I suppose you boys ran away from the banquet, too. Sit down and we'll have a party of our own. I want some tea; do you?"

I was astonished. I had supposed tea was something with which to wash down food so you could eat fast. Was the woman going to have a meal? We both sat down. We could always eat.

"No'm," said Cam easily, "we didn't run away from any banquet. This one's given by a lot of grown-up people in this town, also Doctor Punts, and us kids haven't anything to do with it, except that if there's anything left Mr. McPetherick, who runs

the Tennessee Rest'rant, is goin' to give us a chance. So we hope the superintendent ain't so very hungry an' that he'll leave some ice-cream."

Mrs. Hirschlager naturally laughed at the idea of the superintendent being very hungry. And then she exclaimed suddenly and triumphantly, "Just the thing! I have it! Sing, give us that ice-cream right now, we won't wait until dinner. And, Sing, quick now! these boys are hungry."

"Ol light, Missa Hirsligger," said Sing and, while you winked, it came on and a little cloth was spread on a folding table and we all sat down.

That was the first time I ever ate ice-cream; Cam said he had often eaten it in Worcester, Massachusetts. But in spite of the extra practice he had had, I ate more than he did, and we both had all we could hold. Just think of that woman being smart enough to see that we were so healthy we could not be hurt, no matter how much we ate.

When Mrs. Hirschlager heard Worcester, Massachusetts, she was interested. After a few moments she came back to it.

"I'm from Worcester, too," she said. "What is your name?"

"Cam Clarke, ma'am, and this," and he jerked his thumb boyishly, I can see it yet, "is Mart Campin, and we're chums, but he ain't from Worcester, Mass."

"I'm Mrs. Hirschlager," she responded, bowing her head to us both and smiling, "and I'm pleased to make your acquaintance." And then she puckered her eyebrows. "You remind me of people," she said, looking at Cam; but just then we had to

admit that we were full and that changed the subject.

Mrs. Hirschlager asked if we would not show her the town, as she was sure it was an interesting place if one had a good guide to point things out, and she supposed we would be excellent guides. We said we, too, thought it was an interesting place and we told her to come on. We were delighted to show things to her because she was so agreeable and so pretty and because she had such pretty clothes — and, indeed, for almost every reason that we could remember we liked it. Except Sarah Clarke, Washtucna had never seen any one like her. We were as proud of her as Washtucna was of Sarah Clarke.

We showed her Washtucna without reservation, the unwashed Washtucna, the real Washtucna. First we took her to the stock yards, which, in our opinion, were the heart of the place, and she peeped and chattered like a bird. Then we showed her the place where Sam Bundy was killed by his horse and the very spot on which old Tom Schlageter was shot and the little plot where Jim Lent was buried. I doubt if any one else could have shown her so many exact spots. We were good guides, but her interest in the particular spots was, I suspect, luke-warm. She very politely praised each of them, but there was no genuine enthusiasm in her. We then, as a crowning honour, introduced her to Mr. Pete Barker and to Mr. Bob Dalton, who were standing in front of Jan Havland's saloon smoking brown paper cigarettes and talking of Washtucna's future. These gentlemen were greatly surprised at having her brought up and I believe they were somewhat embarrassed. They

had stayed away from the banquet, they said, because Mr. McPetherick "couldn't find enough dishes in the Tennessee Rest'rant to feed the multitude." We explained to them what we were doing and what we had already done, and Mr. Bob Dalton immediately spoke up in indignation.

"Why, you-all boys ain't got as much sense as any frozen eared cayuse when a dog barks at him. Why, the only shows in this yere town that's wuth seein' air Mrs. Clarke and Doc Punts, an' Punts is workin' and can't be seen, bein' toast-master. But you-all boys take this lady to see Mrs. Clarke at onct and don't be chivying around the edges of things any more. Now, vamoose! — or, wait — I'll go too."

At this moment it became evident that the banquet was breaking up. There were cheers inside and then little Skookum Jones and big Mr. Hirschlager appeared at the door, arm in arm, engaged in confidential conversation. Mr. Skookum was informing the superintendent in strict secrecy that the Palouse Country was rich and always would be rich. Just behind were John Bradford and Punts, then the rest in a wild crowd.

Mr. Hirschlager extracted himself and came directly over to his wife. She took hold of him in a manner that showed that she was entirely mistress of him and dragged him off to take Mr. Bob Dalton's advice and call on Mrs. Clarke. This was a splendid stroke of policy, had Mr. Hirschlager but known it. Washtucna would have elected him President after that; for in its simple mind Washtucna still fancied that all the enterprises of married people were undertaken on the initiative of husbands.

"I made up my mind an hour ago to see your mother," said Mrs. Hirschlager as we walked along. "You remind me of things dreadfully. You see, dear," she spoke to her husband, "Cam here is from Worcester and you remember Sarah Cameron —"

"That's my mother," said Cam. "Sarah Cameron Clarke."

"I knew she came west," Mrs. Hirschlager chirruped, lengthening her pace eagerly.

Sarah Clarke's little place looked quite wonderful as we approached it. The ground about it had somehow spontaneously burst into blossom in strange contrast to the surrounding yellow hillsides and the house itself looked beautifully homelike.

"What a dear place!" cried Mrs. Hirschlager eagerly. "And how clean and cool and airy!" And then we were arrived and Sarah Clarke was standing in the door with a questioning, eager expression on her face.

Never was Sarah Clarke more delicately beautiful. Some shadows of colour had been driven to her thin, almost transparent cheeks by excitement and she looked at Mrs. Hirschlager with a curious intentness in which recognition and gladness were a part.

"I think," said Mrs. Clarke, her low, clear voice rather choked with feelings, "that you are Fanny Neville and that I am Sally Cameron," and she held out both her arms.

Mrs. Hirschlager grasped her tight and they both cried a little for pleasure. And when any of us had time to look around, Mr. John Bradford, Mr. Skookum Jones and Doc Punts were amongst us.

Jones was wiping his eyes, Bradford was making a joke and Punts was pulling his beard.

Then the ladies walked up and down outside, arm about waist, and talked for a long time, while Mr. Hirschlager, Bradford, Jones and Punts smoked inside and played solo and Cam and I played jackstones.

That night we all had dinner on the car *Kootenai* with the Hirschlagers. They had made me promise to come, too, out of sheer kindness of heart and I had spent most of the afternoon in washing and scrubbing myself under the personal directions of my father, who took time off from his bench for this purpose. The little man was greatly excited by the honours I had received. "'Tis not a Campin will iver disgrace 'em afther such ginirosity and civility; no, sor!" And he gave me such extra rubs that in places I believe he removed the skin as well as the dirt. Cleanliness was to his mind more a mark of respect, a dress uniform, as it were, than a good habit.

When Cam saw me, he said I shone like the ball on the new flagstaff, which embarrassed me with the fear that I was too clean. Still, I reflected that I could easily correct that. But Sarah Clarke and Mrs. Hirschlager kissed me, which further embarrassed me, but which also reassured and delighted me and made me glad I was scrubbed.

We sat down to dinner, I in considerable perturbation, but not so either Sarah Clarke or Cam. Those two looked out of their beautiful mottled eyes as calmly as if they had been eating bacon from tin plates. They seemed to be the sort of people who

feel and act the same before kings as before beggars. To me it was the most wonderful meal of which I ever partook. It was as full of sensations as being in love. I would give five hundred sheep now for such a dinner; but such a one cannot be purchased for me again, I have too good food at home. The dishes seemed so fragile that I was afraid almost to touch them. There were mushrooms — think of such a fantastically luxurious dish! And the grown-ups of the party drank a beautiful sparkling wine from *France* — it would have astonished me considerably less to have discovered that it was from Heaven; for I had heard that place mentioned much more frequently than France and I had no doubt that Heaven would be easier to reach.

" Mrs. Clarke," said Mr. Hirschlager, just before we left, and he took Mrs. Clarke's hands in both his, " Fanny says you must come see us in Spokane very soon and so do I. We are leaving to-night at midnight. We'll see you before the visit — every time we go through — but if between times anything isn't just right, you'll tell us at once, now won't you? — So we hope we'll see you often — and Cam, too.

" You understand that, too, do you, young man? " asked Mr. Hirschlager with large joviality of Cam.

" Yes, sir."

All of which foregoing incidents became of vast importance to Cam; became, indeed, the very stuff of which his life was woven.

As we left them, the Hirschlagers were still speaking importunate invitations — to me also, which I never can forget.

That night that distinguished coterie of Mrs. Clarke's admirers, Doc Punts, John Bradford and Mr. Skookum Jones, all escorted Mrs. Clarke home. As usual, however, on such occasions, it was John Bradford and Mrs. Clarke who walked side by side talking intimately, while Punts and Skookum Jones walked together behind. They were all three suitors of Sarah Clarke's, that had long since become evident. However, Jones and Punts seemed early to recognise that John Bradford was a more suitable person than either of themselves; they had their claims too but they would let his be adjudicated first. They liked John Bradford, and I suppose they took a fatherly interest in those two younger people while they continued largely enamoured of the lady themselves. One, I believe, can be enamoured of a woman without expecting to marry her and one even can smother the desire to murder his rivals.

CHAPTER XIV

IN the last part of that summer's school vacation, Sim Horlacker, whose father was the editor of *The Washtucna Sun,* came down to Washtucna with his mother to join Mr. Horlacker, who by this time considered himself a permanent inhabitant. Being shot in the stomach made him feel at home. Sim was one of the liveliest boys who ever came to Washtucna, but he did not put Cam in eclipse although he gave him a run for his money. Sim was a sport, a "nacherl-born" sport. He wore long trousers two years too soon and when he arrived in Washtucna he already had a vest with only room on it for three buttons. This he wore on Sundays over a "bald-faced" shirt and the effect was a considerable diminution in Mr. Pete Barker's reputation as a dandy. If a boy, people said, can show him up, what could a man do if he tried? Mr. John Bradford, however, remained on a pinnacle of perfection for correct dress. No one even competed with him, so people affected in this respect to despise his accoutrements.

Within two days after Sim arrived he was out fooling with Cam, courting a fight, and that after Sandy and I had solemnly warned him that Cam could "lick" any boy in this town or in any town any place. It was evident that Sim believed we were mistaken, that he was the exception himself, and he

at least was determined to demand an irrefutable demonstration.

Now Cam really was peaceable by nature, but I knew that if Sim kept fooling with him long enough those mottled eyes would take fire and Cam would burn up with fighting zeal. Cam took everything he could without resentment, but when Sim tied hard knots in Cam's shirt while we were in swimming, Cam decided there would be no more. He arose in wrath.

Cam did not say anything even then, he never did on such occasions, he just went up to Sim and slammed his little hard fist at Sim's jaw. Sim did not say anything either, he also was a meagre talker, he just hit back. They clinched and broke and wrestled silently and fiercely for about half an hour on the edge of the swimming hole. It was awesome to the rest of us, no other Washtucna boys fought that way. Other boys prepared their courage by talking, boasting and lying, just as Sandy did, and in battle they stimulated their rage with tears. But Cam and Sim did not, they just buckled down to business and stayed there, like two bull terriers, their little naked bodies threshing back and forth and perspiring and panting. We were appalled by it, yet it was very entertaining.

There never was any end to that fight, for we pulled them apart, tucked our clothes under our respective arms and ran for the brush. We had seen approaching old Mr. Lafiere, the French market gardener, who was coming down to drive us out of his pond with a blacksnake. He was saving that pond, it appeared, for a personal trout pool, and

swimming stirred up the mud and drove the trout out. I now sympathise with him but he made a mistake. A personal trout pool in a good location for swimming is " agin nature," it is no use to try for it; you might as well try to raise palm trees in an ice-house.

The quarrel between Cam and Sim seemed to temporarily die. Cam and Sim ignored each other but some of Cam's henchmen went over to Sim.

A few days later, while Cam and I were fishing on Pine Creek, some of the boys left in Washtucna decided it would be a good thing to start a secret society or a lodge. Sandy was one of them. Sim was not. Sandy at once organised the I.O.D.P., which means the Independent Order of Dirty Paws. Cam and I ignored the lodge and every day for a week we went fishing and pretended there was no lodge. The lodge did not prosper very much because Cam was not in it. Nothing prospered without Cam in those days — that is, except Sim Horlacker; he got along pretty well for a while.

Now it happened that absolutely all the boys in Sandy's lodge were sons of Sinners. That was Sim Horlacker's chance. He organised a lodge amongst the Saints boys and got himself elected " Most High Flat-headed Royal King." Julie Beauclerc wanted Cam and me to join it because, of course, her father was a Saint and so was she. And she was an honourary member of Sim's lodge herself.

Well, we would not join Sim's lodge even for Julie, because we were enemies to Sim and he held all the offices. Julie then got angry and said Sim was " real nice," much nicer than Cam ever had been.

Then Sim started playing with Julie a lot and finally Julie said to me that she never had liked Cam Clarke anyway and she wished he would not come around, and the same to me, only more of them.

I told Julie she was lying about Sim being nicer than Cam, which Cam said was correct but not polite and I must not say it again, to which I agreed, as I said Julie was so smart you need not tell her *anything* twice and she already had my message. Cam was hurt by what Julie had said. He had intended staying out of these lodges entirely, as he was neither Saint nor Sinner, but now he made up his mind to go into Sandy's lodge and be elected First High Royal President of the I.O.D.P. himself. I told Sandy how Cam felt and of course he said come right in, that he had always wanted Cam for president anyway. That's what a boy like Sandy would say.

We came into the lodge and at the first meeting Cam called a council of war, which declared war on Sim Horlacker's lodge, and then we decided to have a cave as a stronghold. The best cave we could find was an old coyote den up on Granite Hill, so we took that. It smelled rotten and we never went in except to explore, but it made good headquarters.

We had battles every day for a week with Sim Horlacker's gang, using slings and darts and stones but nobody got killed, which is a miracle. But miracles are so common that we think there are none. In the last fight we captured the M.H.F.R.K., which was Sim, and dispersed his forces and made him take the oath of allegiance. Everybody agreed that Sim was licked.

But just next day Sim appeared again as strong

as ever. Cam was disgusted. "What's the use?" he said. "The durn fool won't stay licked. I ain't goin' to fight in wars if people won't stay licked. Let 'em war with themselves."

The I.O.D.P. agreed with Cam. But Cam later in life got a fondness for unbeatable people. He used to go around hunting for people who did not know they were licked, only he always tried to have them on his side and, indeed, he has been known to change sides just to have this advantage. To such ones he gave away principalities in all but name.

By way of enterprise and amusement Cam proposed that the lodge should quit war and engage in the ancient, romantic and dignified practice of robbery. He thought the robbery business very promising as there were water-melons ripening every day. The members of the lodge were all sons of nominally Christian families, but I am proud to relate that no weak-kneed respect for private property appeared. Every one of us was enthusiastic for the new enterprises. Hurrah for robbery!

We started operations at once. One by one we fore-gathered fearfully about midnight at the end of the depot and then silently made our way south and entered the field of Mr. Lafiere, the market gardener. We arrived at an unfortunate moment: that old gentleman was for some reason prowling around his field with a shot gun loaded with salt, which instrument he fired at us. Happily the range was long, but I got a sprinkling of it in such a region that had I been a bird I had been afterwards easily caught. Cam and Sandy got some too and it stung so sharply that when we three crawled into bed in

Rusher's hay mow we could not sleep, at least not until daylight. We just squirmed and talked and listened to the horses chew and stamp and wondered how long it would be before we could sit down again.

Long afterwards I told Mr. Lafiere to whom he was indebted for the pleasure of that midnight gun practice and as he considered the idea of Cam Clarke, who had long since become famous or infamous — at any rate had become an international figure — dodging salt from his shot gun, he fell into loud roars of laughter. But we did not laugh much at the time, as I explained to Mr. Lafiere. He, however, was unsympathetic.

In the morning we all went down to Sarah Clarke's for breakfast, as the conversation at the Rushers' would not be delicate enough for our jangling nerves and, besides, they were a suspicious lot. However, as soon as we arrived in the house even Sarah Clarke saw that things were twisted somewhere — perhaps she got the idea from the conservative way in which we sat down on a chair, I don't know. At any rate, in two minutes she had all three of us telling her what we had each vowed to keep secret forever and I do not know how that was done either. We promised never to do *it* again, which was a promise we made joyfully, as we had no desire whatever to be shot with salt again. But we can scarcely be said to have permanently given up hope of some day stealing a melon. Mrs. Clarke probably realised that.

We were discouraged temporarily with robbing and Cam said we better quit it, as to keep on would be to do what Mr. Pete Barker called " forcing

your luck," " which, as every card-sharp knows, ain't a good thing to do." Besides, if people were going to stand around with shot guns loaded with salt all night, they need not expect him to do their robbing. No, sir! They would have to get somebody else.

This sounded convincing; we gave up robbery and for two days we did almost nothing but watch Mr. Hoefner shoe horses. We would have kept this up but Mr. Hoefner suggested that we watch somebody else for a day or two, as he was tired showing off. He made this remark in such a tone of voice as convinced us he was very earnest, so we left him alone. A boy could get but little encouragement to virtue in that town. Still, I suppose we ought not to have tickled the horses in the flanks, it might have hurt Mr. Hoefner when they kicked instead of just knocking him down.

For one day we were bored. It was the regular day to go up to Beauclerc's pretending we were Sioux and massacre Julie, but we could not go now and Cam got too melancholic for anything. He wanted to know if I thought Sim was massacring Julie and altogether was really morbid in his thoughts. Along in the afternoon we just lay down in the shade of the new lumber warehouse and went sadly to sleep. Cam woke us up.

" Kids," he said, " I got a new scheme. Now you fellers meet me down here to-night at ten — you just sneak out after everybody is asleep and I'll be here."

His idea was to keep secret until night what we were to do, but of course he could not. He finally told Sandy and me what the plan was. We were to

" tick-tack " the laundry of Mr. Won Gee, a dwarf Chinaman, who had just moved into town. Sandy and I did not know what a " tick-tack " was, but Cam vindicated the higher civilization of Worcester, Massachusetts, by showing us. Worcester, Massachusetts, we decided, must be the last word in civilization.

Washtucna had some advantages, however, for boys. One was that people went to bed so early that a boy did not need to stay awake all night before he sneaked out. Think of a boy in New York waiting for his parents to go to bed before he went down the fire-escape! It could not be done: boy nature is not equal to it. One would fall asleep while he waited.

We met at the lumber yard at ten and tried our apparatus. It consisted of a kite string tied to a fish hook and a piece of rosin. We stuck the fish hook in the side of the lumber shed, then Cam went off to the end of the string and pulled it taut and rubbed the rosin on it. Sandy and I heard a sound like that of a tremendously discordant, distant fiddle. It was splendid and we told Cam so. He asked if it sounded like a snoring sea-lion. We could not remember. He said that he was glad it did, because he liked sea-lions and Chinamen were " skeert of 'em." After that he discoursed for some moments on the psychology of the " heathen Chinee."

We were now satisfied that our machinery was working, so we went up like shadows and hooked the fish hook to the side of Mr. Won Gee's house just under the window, and retreated to an obscure position behind a pile of lumber, which had been

assembled for building a new saloon, the same being badly needed, as Washtucna had by this time only nine saloons, which were evidently too few. Then we rubbed away.

We got no result. Could they be dead inside?

"I guess the hook has come out," whispered Cam; "come on, Mart, le's see if it is. You wait, Sandy; we'll fix it."

I was not very enthusiastic, but I went. We crawled up in the bright moonlight, stopping frequently to listen, but we did not hear a sound until we were right under the window — when, slam! the window banged open and the little dwarf Chinaman, Won Gee, the boss human clothes sprinkler of the world, landed right between us, waving what seemed to us to be a knife as long as a man's leg. As he landed he was screaming and roaring like a spoiled stallion, and he looked earnest.

Not, however, that we looked at Won Gee very long on that occasion. We ran, just melting with fear, without any more idea where to run than a rabbit. But the Chinaman was fast, he kept pretty close behind, yelling like a flock of fiends. He was worse than coyotes. He should have been chained up some place for use as a fire alarm.

The next thing I remember was that I dashed headforemost into Mr. Pete Barker, as that elegant gentleman was taking a solitary stroll and smoking his evening cigar.

Mr. Barker was not surprised; it was his business to remain unsurprised on all occasions and he knew his business. He very skilfully gathered Cam and Sandy and me simultaneously into his grip of steel

and inquired mildly what was the matter with us "little devils."

Mr. Barker's answer was atop of him, we had no need to speak it. Little Won Gee, still howling in rage, arrived, and he was self-explanatory. When we saw his knife gleam in the moonlight we squirmed to get away. Mr. Barker at once released us and paused in what I believe was genuine astonishment, or some similar emotion. This emotion, whatever it was, cleared the way for burning indignation. Mr. Barker rushed at that poor little Won Gee with all of his two hundred pounds afire with anger. He struck the knife hand, and the knife flew a hundred feet, and then Won Gee was felled by the equivalent of a ton of brick, namely, Mr. Barker's right hand, and then he was kicked several times by a falling tree. Nevertheless, Won Gee got up and retreated, now screaming as loudly with fright as formerly with indignation. He took refuge in the laundry, whither Mr. Pete Barker presently followed. I am informed that the occupants left by the back door and that in the laundry Mr. Pete Barker did nothing more violent than to lay the knife on the ironing table and depart.

But Mr. Barker's wrath was not appeased; I understand that at Jan Havland's he seriously proposed lynching every Oriental in town. But more moderate counsel prevailed. And we boys all sneaked home to bed with chattering teeth.

Next day the word of the whole transaction went the rounds and we boys got a good deal of blame from our parents. Cam, indeed, went with his mother and apologised to both Won Gee and his

partner, Ah Toy, and they all parted excellent friends; and then Mrs. Clarke sent a note of thanks to Mr. Pete Barker. This shows how little she cared for logic — that she could simultaneously make friendly overtures to both sides. Mrs. Clarke thereby showed the superiority of her sex. A man may not act logically, but he thinks he ought to; a woman does not care a rap about logic.

Mr. Pete Barker's wrath, however, continued. I heard him say to Judge Rusher, "Why, Judge, I don't comprehend exactly why you should defend these here Chinese heathens. What I'm desiring to know is whether Caucasian boys are goin' to be murdered in the streets of this municipality unrebuked. I protest, Judge. It won't do. Why, those young chaps are scared yet. The natural amusements of innocent childhood are being infringed. I ain't no father as I know of, but I'm public spirited."

"Pete," said Judge Rusher, "you're in wrong. If you had a boy in your family you'd understand just exactly why this Chink busted loose last night. Why, Pete, I'm often in danger of killing a few boys myself, including my own, and if I was an Oriental I'd do it. I tell you it requires a heap of forbearance to let a boy stay on alive until he gets sense. Yes, sir! my sympathy in this case is with the heathen Chinee; there ain't no virtue whichever in the boys of this town. An', for that matter, they'll probably grow up to be men as cantankerous as you and me. And if the heathen can save us from that, let him, I say — yes, sir!"

Mr. Pete Barker could not understand and thereafter, like so many bachelors, he commenced to

lament the tendencies of modern parenthood, the lack of understanding and lack of friendship in the relation. His idea was, I believe, that every married man should have thirteen children, each one reared on original principles. If a boy ever wanted to go "tick-tack" a Chinaman, the parent should help, and then lynch the Chinaman afterwards if he got noisy. Now this latter step would, I conceive, have been a great mistake in the West. If the Chinamen all had been lynched, boys might have had to stone their own mothers, which is impracticable. It was wiser to spare the Chinamen. The Caucasian race has again vindicated its wisdom.

All of us boys shortly became reconciled with Won Gee's whole establishment. We gave Ah Toy a kitten, which we borrowed from Mr. Billy Carroll, and he gave us five *lichi* nuts apiece and carried to Sarah Clarke some candy that she could not eat, though she tried. But Cam and I could. We could eat anything. To be true, Mr. Billy Carroll tore up the furniture of the laundry when he found his kitten under Won Gee's ironing board; but the Chinese attributed this act to natural violence, and in their ignorance of English never guessed where the cat came from.

Of course our adventure became a subject for argument and abuse by the two Washtucna papers. *The Sun* arraigned "that unnatural parent Judge R——, who would feed his own child to the murderous hunger of the unconverted savage heathen Chinee; yes, and would also sacrifice other people's children, who, by heredity and parental example, were less likely to be criminals than his own wild progeny."

The Breeze, on the contrary, considered Judge Rusher's words to be worthy a Roman father of the "heroic age." "There is something sublime," said the editorial, "in such a sense of justice. One instinctively removes his hat. One seldom sees it in these degenerate days, but it is admirable. Emulate him, parents, emulate him!"

This discussion was continued in rising pitch until the comments became entirely personal abuse between the editors; whereupon other subjects were taken up, and these in turn also drifted into the channels of personal abuse.

I was proud of my part in the whole transaction until one evening, somewhat later, I heard those fast friends, Doc Punts and John Bradford, who had evidently been discussing the affair, deliver their final opinion in that matter. They were sitting on the veranda of the Tennessee Restaurant, watching the colours fade in the west, and listening to the mechanical orchestra in Jan Havland's, the same which had cost three thousand dollars second hand in Spokane.

"Boys are unruly damn little fool cusses and awful unfair," said Punts in staccato. Bradford agreed.

"But a person naturally likes them," added Bradford, after some thought.

"Oh, yes — sometimes I wish I had several myself," agreed Punts; whereupon a coyote howled and I felt better. And that, by the way, was the last coyote I ever heard howl in Washtucna. Human beings were crowding them out.

Later that evening Mr. Bradford would either drop in alone for a half hour with Sarah Clarke or he would be joined by his friends Punts and Skookum

Jones and they would execute a joint call. That was routine. And always Sarah Clarke was sewing. The conversation turned usually upon land, cattle and various happenings in Montana, Colorado and New Mexico, preferably upon shooting scrapes and extraordinary adventures. Some of the talk was tall. But occasionally John Bradford would break his reserve and talk of New York or London or the woods of Maine. Such accounts as he gave of London and New York I believed to be fictitious, but I thought them interesting and Sarah Clarke thought so, too, though for different reasons from mine.

CHAPTER XV

NO matter what else Washtucna omitted to do that summer, she did not omit to grow. Grocery stores, drygoods stores, saloons and women of Magdalene's trade arrived to us every day. And there was business for all. Also every train brought land-hungry, genuine settlers, both men from our own older States and poor immigrant families direct from beyond the great water, principally Scandinavians, Germans and Irish. Oh, it was lively! The poker game in Jan Havland's never stopped for two months — oh, it was very lively!

Of course, as Washtucna and the Palouse Country grew in population, the rival tribes of Saints and Sinners attracted new recruits. Indeed, almost every new arrival quickly accumulated one set or another of these preferences and prejudices and learned to speak of perfectly reputable people as cattle-thieves. There had been from the first a non-partizan element, and, of course, this also grew in numbers. Amongst them Doc Punts was unique. He was belligerently non-partizan. He snarled at both sides and cursed them and challenged them and without partiality mended their physiognomies when they were shot or cut up, which, for a short period of time, was very frequently — too frequently, the neutrals said.

When Washtucna was incorporated a town it had naturally elected Punts mayor, as he was considered

the only capable person to preside over a council composed partly of Saints, partly of Sinners. One of his first duties was to select a marshal for the council to approve. I say, select for the council to approve, as to approve his decisions was the only power he left it. He had at first selected Mr. Dan True to occupy the honourable and onorous position. It is my remembrance that the office was without emolument, and it was honourable chiefly because it was the most dangerous post available. A zealous marshal had not any more chance to miss assassination than has the President of the United States. True accepted.

Mr. True was a mild, sleepy man who paid very little attention to anything, and under his beneficent rule people maimed and mangled each other to their hearts' content. He openly announced it as his platform that every one should have a "square deal." Just what a "square deal" was, it was at first difficult to say, but we gradually found out that it consisted in not shooting or striking a man from the rear. The ethics of this was a little beyond Washtucna; she would as soon shoot through a man from one side as the other. But she accepted the rule and Mr. True lay back in the firm belief that he had instituted a great moral reform. And perhaps he had.

But Punts, M.D., was not satisfied. Although he was, without doubt, conscious of the pecuniary advantages accruing to himself as a surgeon from a continuance of the reign of violence, the soul of a civil administrator would not permit him to rest satisfied with anything less than law and order. He dismissed Mr. True and that gentleman was so sur-

prised that when I last saw him, twenty years afterwards, he was still wondering at the cause. That was when Cam Clarke's name was on the lips of half the Caucasian race, but Mr. True could not remember him. However, he remembered the wild, long-whiskered old Punts, long since gone into the iron frontier of North Canada; perhaps, indeed, gone father yet, for all I know — perhaps into the still colder land of death.

Some one suggested that a marshal should have a salary. "No, sir! there shall be no pay," bawled Punts, addressing the council, pulling his long beard to one side and grinning his devilish grin. "It should be an honour to serve this body politic, and it is — which I defy any man of different opinion. Gents of this council, Mr. V. Y. Trillums will be the next marshal and we'll have order and justice. And now this council will vote upon this appointment and confirm it, which it is the usage of free governments always to vote on such things. I'm tired of discussion."

The council smilingly voted "Ay" with one exception. Anything Punts proposed was all right. That exceptional member ventured for some reason or no reason to expostulate.

"Silence!" roared Mayor Punts. "I will have no remonstrances from the disorderly members of this council. Such people are hoboes! Hoboes of the highest order, hoboes of the first water — gents, we'll vote! I repeat it. I'm tired of argument. Does the council attempt to bulldoze me?"

At this stage Cam and I, who had been occupying an obscure position behind the big stove, withdrew.

It appeared later that the council sustained Mayor Punts unanimously and that it freely extended him a vote of unlimited confidence. They were proud of his rugged arrogance, and, besides, there were those amongst them who, for personal reasons, were growing tired of the sound of pistol shots, and there were others who, for reasons of municipal policy, desired to see a period of peace and order. It was said that a number of prospective settlers of a desirable sort had recently decided, after viewing the rapidly growing graveyard on Robert's Hill, to locate in more salubrious and less exciting surroundings. Washtucna did not like this. Her disorders she had considered as rough play and she did not like to see them taken seriously.

The council and Washtucna in general had confidence in Mr. Trillums. He was as quiet and as small as Mr. True, but he was exceedingly alert; and as the little grizzled, stoop shouldered ex-soldier went silently about minding his own business with meticulous care, people very soon developed a habit of stepping off the sidewalk in order not to delay him; and they shortly commenced to speak of him as a genuine marshal. Their interest in the man grew, but the only piece of knowledge in common circulation concerning his past was the account of those three fingers he lost on Sherman's march to the sea. This tale, I believe, grew somewhat after he was appointed marshal. People said Sherman had wept about it and that little Mr. Trillums, although his wound was at the time considered mortal on account of a gangrenous condition, continued on the march, and that he even still refused to stop marching when he got so

bad a fever that he could have had himself no reasonable expectations of living. Where these veracious narratives came from I am unable to say, but, as Cam said, "Mr. Trillums never started 'em: he's so reticent he won't tell the time of day." Mr. Trillums, it may be stated with certainty, never started any piece of talk in his life.

Mr. Trillums was, by profession, a cattleman. His ranch was down in Dry Creek, where they breed all the rattlesnakes in the world. He had come to Washtucna to give his two children the incomparable advantage of attending Professor J. Stilson's school, likewise to give his wife a chance to attend church as much as she wished, while he worked like a slave in a garden back of the house.

Mr. Trillums spoke to the council to thank them in his thin thread of a voice, which could scarcely be heard twenty feet. "I hev," said he haltingly, "allus favoured law, order, education and mil'tary service;" and then he invited the council to contemplate the beneficent condition in which the Prussians lived, and ended by exhorting the sky to "emulate them." The council listened patiently to his brief remarks, and then presented him with his badge of office, a large brass star, which Mr. Trillums placed in his pocket. As he did so he said that every one knew who was marshal anyway, and it was no use to be "garbed up in uniform." Then he wished them luck and went home, and it is said that he cleaned up his old-fashioned revolvers with great care, said his prayers, and went to bed.

A day or two later a large bucking contest was held on such part of Mr. Day's flat as was not covered

with the tents or shacks of a rapidly growing town. It was attended by the champion cow-punchers of the Palouse. Mr. Scoop Bender rode a bay steer which protested, Mr. Alva Young put a dollar in each of his stirrups and kept them there fifteen minutes while his horse bucked "ad lib." Then Mr. Bob Dalton "bulldogged" a steer, which performance consists in catching it by the horns, throwing it and holding it down with your teeth. This last was considered good, but as a grand finale Mr. Gunnysack Charlie, who, I regret to say, was somewhat elated with Jan Havland's worst liquor, remembered the skill of his youth and, at the instance of Cam and me, rode around the field, amidst vociferous cheers, standing on his head on the bare back of the little mule Mary. This was a creditable performance and Cam and I felt like parents to it, but Mr. Gunnysack ungratefully abused us roundly next day, saying he had a headache due to "invertin' himself." We pointed out that other things than "invertin'" oneself produce headaches, but he refused to listen to us. Nevertheless, we continued to be proud of our part in the bucking contest.

While the activities just outlined were so prosperously proceeding, two men had arrived in town without attending the contest. One was Mr. Slim Hayes, a gambler from Colfax, the other was Mr. John Bradford, who returned at this moment from the business of some land deal; for he was just commencing those extensive purchases of land which, together with his other activities, and the charming personality that had thitherto been kept muffled, were to make him for a time the most distinguished person

in Washtucna, not excepting even those eminent men, Rusher, Beauclerc and Punts.

After the bucking contest was over, Mr. Alva Young and Mr. Scoop Bender were so impressed with their own skill in riding that they " liquored up " in celebration of it. Having spent a reasonable time in this industry they walked down the street arm in arm and came across Miss May Caylor talking to Slim Hayes in broad daylight. There seems to have been no impropriety in this as both of them were people of such wholly undoubtful reputation that no association could have injured either. But the two cow-punchers, to whom both Slim and Miss Caylor were entire strangers, objected. They said they were jealous. Miss Caylor was flattered by this warm attention, and she managed even to colour clear through with crimson the vast incrustation of white powder on her haggard cheeks. But Mr. Slim Hayes found the compliment less pleasing, and with some reason. It is, in fact, nothing short of a bore to be the object of the jealousy of two armed and intoxicated cowboys.

Mr. Scoop Bender looked Slim over carefully and studiously, as though that gentleman were the strangest specimen of a naturalist's collection. Then he took out a long barrelled revolver and very deliberately aimed and fired it at a point exactly midway between Mr. Hayes's feet and about an inch from each one.

Mr. Hayes threw himself out of joint in the jump he made. Miss Caylor giggled. She was a cool woman by nature and one of varied experience. Slim would have fled but he dared not. The chal-

lenge of a moving target might prove too much for these ruffians' self-control. Mr. Hayes wished he had stayed in Colfax.

"Whichever is this sport doin' here anyway, Alva?" asked Mr. Scoop Bender querulously of his partner. "An' why don't he keep out o' this village? His health ain't goin' to be decent here. I just know it ain't; it's goin' to peter right out, 'specially if he keeps on joshin' the ledies this way. I'm of a jealous nature, Alvy, an' I can't stand for it."

Mr. Slim Hayes grew pale and he sweated and squirmed tremendously and blinked like an owl. Miss Caylor smiled coquettishly. "Now you all boys come off, don't shoot this gent," she pleaded, "he don't mean no harm. We're old friends."

Mr. Alva Young, who had thitherto remained inactive, looking very thoughtful, now volunteered his services "to he'p run this snake out o' town, as the ledies air desirin' that he shan't be killed." And then he argued how unfair it would be to shoot a man whose life a lady valued.

Miss Caylor entering a further protest against murder, Scoop Bender said that the expulsion of the gentleman from town would be satisfactory to him. "Whatch your name?" he asked Mr. Hayes violently. Mr. Hayes told him. "Then, Mr. Hayes," said Scoop politely, "vamoose! Savvy? *Hias, clatawa* — run!" and he pointed down the dusty stage road. Mr. Hayes knew no Chinook, but he understood the invitation to leave, and he accepted it with alacrity. Scoop was eloquent in Chinook.

Scoop watched him grow small in the distance, and then turned to the audience which had gathered, and

you may be sure Cam and I were in it. "You understand, gents, I'm allus just this way — jealous and tender hearted — allus lettin' somebody off!"

"Sure," said Alva deprecatingly, "if any of these rough-house gents come startin' any nonsense with the ledies of Washtucna, Scoop an' I, we'll run 'em out every time. This here ain't no disorderly town, this town is o' right," and he looked at Miss Caylor for encouragement. But her mood had changed. She was coolly pulling her hair up from over her ears and tucking it more or less neatly away. Alva, to show his sense of the changed atmosphere, commenced petulantly shooting the insulators off a telegraph pole.

Miss Caylor watched him with a bored expression. "Boys," said she, calling Cam and me, "I'm tired of this here disorder myself. You tell Mr. Trillums there's too much noise. The old fellow must be asleep — the idea of two roughs bein' allowed to shoot up a town like this."

Scoop and Alva looked at her in astonishment and Cam and I departed at once on Miss Caylor's errand, hoping fearsomely that we could bring Mr. Trillums down and so produce additional fireworks. As we went, we could hear both Scoop and Alva begging Miss Caylor to recall us, as Mr. Trillums was a nice man and they liked him and did not want to break his sleep.

Mr. Trillums was, indeed, in the centre of a solid and reliable afternoon nap and it was difficult to rouse him; but when we succeeded in making him understand that disorder was on foot, he came forward promptly, but without any visible weapons

whatever, which was not in accordance with the best traditions for marshals. However, his reputation for determination was worth an arsenal of arms.

Long before we returned down town, close in the wake of Mr. Trillums, Scoop and Alva had forgotten their disinclination for trouble with Mr. Trillums in the pleasure of making people dance for their edification. Jan Havland had danced, stimulated thereto by a pistol shot which grazed one of his great toes, and the celebrators were at work, when we arrived, upon no other person than Mr. John Bradford, who, as we have remarked, had just ridden in from the country. He was dressed in the riding clothes of the "effete" East, and upon this fact both Alva and Scoop allowed themselves wide range in remarks. Mr. John Bradford, at the time he was approached with their seductive invitation to dance, was drinking a glass of beer at Jan Havland's bar. They fired a preliminary shot between his legs to attract his attention — fortunately these legs were slightly bowed. Mr. Bradford, at that particular moment, had his head thrown back, and was draining a glass. With remarkable self-possession he finished the evolution, took out his handkerchief, and wiped his stubby moustache, and then turned around with a cool, hostile and inquisitive glance. The coldness of his glance seems to have been overlooked.

"Le's see you dance, stranger," invited Scoop gently.

Mr. Bradford calmly declined, and leaned his elbow on the bar, his glances not warming in the least. Scoop and Alva were puzzled and somewhat embarrassed. Their invitations were usually given

more consideration. Scoop said in astonishment that he would be "damned," Alva made a similar but more elaborate remark.

It was at this stage that Mr. Trillums arrived, followed, of course, by Cam and me, who had no business to be there. Mr. Trillums came in very quietly and gently, as was his wont. He looked around in a friendly and inquisitive way and then spoke mildly.

"Boys," said he, "you're kickin' it a little too high. Give me your guns — hurry up!" This last sharply, as they appeared to hesitate and to look again longingly at the region between Mr. Bradford's legs. Mr. Bradford continued to stare at them coldly.

Mr. Trillums took a step forward and Scoop and Alva handed over the guns, four in all. Mr. Trillums stuck two in his coat pockets and kept two in his hands. "Now go on over there to the calaboose," he commanded gently; and they marched as obediently as Chinamen out into the bright sunlight and across the dusty road to the calaboose, which was standing wide open, guiltless of a lock, gaping hospitably to all passers.

"Now stay there until I get back," commanded Mr. Trillums, as he departed for the hardware store to buy a lock, leaving the door wide open. The prisoners did so, talking in quiet, disgusted tones of Slim Hayes's low opinion of women and of the extraordinary calm of that Eastern sport, Bradford. Mr. Trillums presently trotted back with a big iron padlock. He shut the door softly, snapped the lock, and walked off, humming "Marching Through Georgia" under his breath, while inside, Scoop and Alva continued uninterrupted the conversation con-

cerning women, Mr. Hayes and John Bradford. Before Cam and me, Mr. Trillums halted. "I believe, sir," said he with the air of having made a discovery, "that General Sherman was a great soldier, as great as Hannibal, young sirs,— I believe it," and he went off, nodding his head and singing "Marching Through Georgia."

We told Sarah Clarke what had happened and she said Mr. Trillums was right, but at the same time she busied herself wrapping up a piece of cake as big as ten of her fists, and a can of sardines. Then she told us to "poke it through the bars to those men inside. They haven't any more sense than you or Cam; probably they did not lay in a supply of cake at all before they went to the 'skookum house.'" And thereby she again showed the masterly superiority of the feminine mind to logic.

We reminded her that the structure of a jail was not quite loose enough to facilitate the passing in of fat chocolate cakes, whereupon she cut it up into pieces, we eating the crumbs. In strict honesty I confess that Scoop and Alva were snoring when we arrived, but we put it between the bars, and I suppose they got it later. "I feel better," said Mrs. Clarke when we told her, "because those men have certainly been kind to me. Why, the way they tear clothes is prodigious. They must do it by machinery." And her eyes got watery and Cam and I ran away, as that always made us as uncomfortable as if we had been caught lying.

Next morning Mr. Trillums turned loose his prisoners and invited them and Mr. Bradford to Jan Havland's to have a glass of beer with him. "Law

and order," said Mr. Trillums with modest pride, "was vindicated here yisti'day; yes, sir!" Scoop and Alva apologised to Mr. Bradford and that gentleman expressed himself as having forgotten the past. But Scoop and Alva would not forget it. They insisted that their shame had been too nearly brought home to them by the kindness of Mrs. Clarke to make forgetfulness easy. "What did that sweet and noble lady do," said Scoop sadly, "but send us renegades, by her own innocent child, a lunch thar in jail. Yes, sir, gents! And while our stomachs weren't none hospitable to food when we waked up, we ate it, which we'd a done under them circumstances if it was lead and poisoned at that, as we was unwillin' to hurt the lady's pinted and delicate feelin's."

The heroic courtesy of Scoop and Alva was so stimulating to Mr. Trillums that he made the statement that whosoever afterwards "went loco" on that shooting business would also be disarmed and arrested, as to do less to them would be to reflect upon his dear friends Scoop and Alva. This was considered a reckless promise, but as Mr. Trillums was one of those men known to be at promised places at promised times, no one openly doubted his statements, although there were questions raised in private as to his probable length of life. But it was because of this promise, which soon became widely known, that the then popular sport of "shooting up" things became obsolete in Washtucna. To "effete" Easterners this was an added charm to Washtucna life.

The next issues of *Sun* and *Breeze* showed an extraordinary condition of opinion. Those two papers

at last had a belief in common. They both believed in Mr. Trillums and supported the policies of the "noble hearted," "battle worn" "sage" and "patriot," "the marshal," "the preserver of civic order," etc., etc., and more of that sort, while Mr. Trillums quietly and earnestly worked in his vegetable garden.

Cam and I, after this true symphony of praise, decided that we would grow up to be marshals instead of cattle-kings and gamblers, and Sarah Clarke expressed wonder that God had not arranged to have more people like Mr. Trillums and fewer like some people she knew in Worcester, Massachusetts, not, however (as she took pains to remark), that there were any similar to them in Washtucna. As this remark was made in the presence of Mr. Skookum Jones, Doc Punts and Mr. Bradford, who were paying their usual bi-weekly call, it was repeated. It was generally interpreted as a remark highly complimentary to all Washtucnans, and, as such, it, of course, has never been allowed to die. And as every man in Washtucna firmly believed himself in his heart as good as Trillums or anybody else, the statement has been found very soothing to the *amour propre* of some thousands of people.

"She's a keen woman, sir," said Mr. Skookum Jones, once, later, in comment, "and she frames up remarks in a highly pleasing way."

"She's just about as smart and agreeable as hell," said Punts, chewing his cigar.

Bradford was absent from this post mortem, but I am of the opinion that he was exactly of the same mind.

CHAPTER XVI

SCHOOL opened that year over Won Gee's laundry because the old school house had been bought for a church. By the time it began Cam was terribly sick of " Three Button " Sim Horlacker, as we called him, on account of his Sunday vest, of which we were all secretly envious. Cam felt that he must do something, but he was patient and bided his time.

What made Cam so sick was not having Julie Beauclerc to tease or talk to, and the kind of sickness he had made him as restless and mean tempered as an ordinary grown person, which is rotten. It was hard on Sandy and me. We did not know what to expect. We would start hunting curlew eggs and half way Cam would change his mind and stick his red head into a stinking coyote hole or decide to go home, and we would have to follow his new whim — and every one knows how trying it is to keep changing your mind. It was hard on us, I say, but we stayed with him and did not complain much. We knew what was the matter. We knew, also, that he was the best fellow we had ever seen and we had no doubt that he would ride Sim Horlacker to school some morning and make him lie down and roll over. We had great faith in his ability as a " buckero " of boys. Incidentally, there have since been grown people who had the same absurd faith in Cam as

a "buckero" of recalcitrant business associates. Their faith was justified and so was ours.

Of course Cam and Sim did not speak to each other. They would walk half a mile to avoid meeting and they played on opposite sides of the school house so as to avoid seeing each other. But one day at noon, apparently by mutual agreement, they both entered the neutral ground behind the school house and without saying a word to anybody started fighting earnestly. And neither one cried or yelled or boasted. But the rest of us yelled so loud with excitement that Professor Jim Stilson was waked from his nap. He rushed down stairs and he and little Ah Toy, the Chinaman, who came out of the laundry, pulled Cam and Sim apart. But it was a hard pull. They fought to get at each other like little devils and they hung on to each other like leeches or bad habits.

Professor Stilson took them upstairs by the backs of their respective coat collars and stood them in opposite corners of the school room. After the noon recess was over he whipped them before the school. That was the final test. He whipped Sim first and Sim bellowed like a calf. That surprised us, because it is not at all the correct thing for a boy to cry on account of a whipping. It surprised us a lot. Sim was showing yellow. Then Professor Stilson whipped Cam much harder than he had whipped Sim. This, I ought to explain, was not due to prejudice, but to the fact that he had warmed up to the work. Cam got white during the operation, but he never uttered a sound. That was the difference between Cam and Sim. Sim was a sport but he had his limits. Cam had no limits. He was a long distance sport

and had Marathon moral powers. He was ready for a fight, for an amputation or for fun. Even his enemies still accord him the same spirit. This whipping episode was a great triumph for Cam. It was easy to see now who was the best boy around. Even Sim could have told and of course little Julie Beauclerc saw it more quickly than anybody. It was better for Cam than if Sim had actually cried "nuff" out there on the playground. Sim shrank up like a withered flower, Cam expanded a little.

That night, after school, Julie said she would not have anything more to do with Sim as he was a coward, a baby and a booby, and she told Cam right before everybody that she thought he was a noble boy. So noble that if he would just quit that I.O.D.P. lodge, she would ask her mother to let him and Sandy and me come up and eat pumpkin pie and drink milk some day. That wrecked I.O.D.P. It would break any lodge.

Cam said that I.O.D.P. was "sort of petered out" anyway and then he remarked that we all liked pumpkin pie and milk better than lodge and finally he said we would come. Sandy and I were glad, we were afraid he would proudly refuse. Then Cam requested her to ask Sim to come too, as he and Sim had decided to be great friends. He did not inform her, I believe, that Sim was not yet aware of this decision; that would have been to "examine too curiously." But Sim, nevertheless, responded, as Cam had predicted, and Cam drove over another hazard by his knowledge of psychology.

Then we all, except Julie, went to the Rushers' hay mow and talked to Mr. John Shoultersack, who was

lying sick with some kind of fever the name of which is Spanish. He had loaded himself with this disease down on the Orinoco in South America, where he had hunted gold or the fountain of youth or general popularity or some such hopeless thing for two seasons without finding it. He was shaking like the piston of a pneumatic hammer when we arrived and he was drinking port wine to cure himself. We said we would go away if he said so, but he asked us to stay, as he always had desired to die in company; besides, he might need some more port, which we could get him from Jan Havland's if he wanted it.

We stayed and he quieted down pretty soon and fell asleep exhausted from the work of manufacturing and exhibiting so fine a chill; so Cam wrote a poem to Julie, which he gave to Sandy to give to me to give to Julie next day at school. I did so, and she said it was like Shakespeare only different, which was a good criticism. And she said she appreciated having it come in such a round about way through so many perils. The perils referred to were those of being thrashed by J. Stilson.

Next morning we went up to see Mr. Shoultersack's remains, but he was sitting up perfectly well, playing solitaire in the hay. He told us, however, not to be discouraged, as he would have another fit in precisely so many days later and perhaps he would die then, so we thanked him and went on to school and said we would watch him through all his periodic sicknesses until he really died.

Things went very satisfactorily at school that day. All the boys came over at recess and joined our gang, and finally Sim did, too, publicly, as he said he didn't

" see no sense to bein' lonesome." It made a big gang and Cam was at the head of it and, indeed, there was thereafter no gang of boys in Washtucna but his as long as ever he continued to live there. In railroad circles it is now the same way. There is no gang but Cameron Clarke's. He is getting to be a nuisance in a way — but let God and Congress tend to that. I am a sheep raiser.

We got awfully tired of school that fall — just as boys do every spring and fall and summer and winter. We wanted so much to be stirring around that it was almost unbearable to sit all day watching Jim Stilson or studying or playing tricks behind your desk, and it even got tiresome to try to understand what the Chinese downstairs said when they chattered like monkeys without saying anything.

I do not now believe that Professor Stilson was a very good teacher. Still, that did not matter too much. If God has given you brains which can really think, not ten thousand Jim Stilsons could put chunks in the gear wheels of your mind; and if you have not brains — well, you need not expect Jim Stilson to supply you. But Professor Jim was picturesque. He used to sit at least half the day with his mouth full of tobacco and with his crooked fingers under his lantern jaw, reading papers full of pictures of ladies in tights. Three times during the day he would go to his locker and swallow a glass of whisky, then he would return and either fall asleep and snore or ask questions of his pupils. Sometimes while he was asleep some of us would creep out and he never knew the difference, even after he awoke. I have had some doubts as to why Mr. Stilson was selected

school-master — not, as I say, that it matters; the second choice would have been a young lady who chewed gum.

Cam and I were always very enterprising in slipping out, and so was Julie. And I wager that even now Cam sometimes leaves the office early. We usually improved such time as we gained in this way by visiting the Chinamen downstairs and thus we got to be great friends with them. This was a very profitable acquaintanceship. They showed us how they smoked opium and Cam started to learn Chinese writing, which are two important things to know. He got far enough to make figures which mean " this is a Chinese laundry," which sign he painted on the door of a church on Hallowe'en, to the intense amusement of the Chinese and to the indignation of a certain Methodist congregation. Sarah Clarke, when we told her of it, said we were wicked, but she did not seem angry, so we did not believe her, and we planned to do that same thing every Hallowe'en all our lives. But things have changed. I seldom decorate churches with such signs now and I doubt if Cam does.

And so the autumn went along and winter came. Sarah Clarke was not well at this time, but we were too heedless to see it. Things went badly also at my house and I was too heedless to feel that much either. My father had grown to be a drunkard so much faster than he became prosperous that he never became prosperous at all. Of course, he reformed every morning when he had a headache, but he went bad again by ten of the clock. And he became so violent tempered that home life, as I remember it,

consisted more in the acrobatic exercise of dodging than in the indulgence of sweet affections. One fortunate thing, our home life made me like school; for being in school involved being away from home and gave me a recess from this infernal dodging. The sport of teasing my father had ceased to be a recompense for the pains of his beatings.

Autumn and winter! Well, the wood fires crackled cheerfully and the oatmeal mush was beautifully warm in the mornings. Yet poor Sarah Clarke! that winter's winds went through you like frozen needles, so thin and frail you were. Punts was worried about Mrs. Clarke and he was worried about my sister Mary, whose cough grew no better.

A. J. Punts, M.D.— that was the way his sign read. He was a good man, and one place where he helped people I remember very distinctly, for the people were we wild Campin children. He and John Bradford had just been to see Mary for her cough and they were walking away through the thin snow, silently, all steeped in thought, when they met my little father aflame with drink, quite wild, quite uncontrollable and on the verge of "tremens." They would not let him go home and after discussion he went back with them to Punts' office, where they cared for him for three days, fed him and lashed him down to the sofa to keep him from killing himself, Bradford sitting on the little man's chest all of one night. And that was the night that Punts sent around a hat for Mary Campin — and Sarah Cameron Clarke carried it — and Mary Campin needs took what it brought, for we were as hungry as wolves. But even that could not stop her cough.

When my father came out he was improved and never again became so bad. There were always flashes of nobility in the little man and when he was good he was better than good.

CHAPTER XVII

IT was shortly after the temporary reformation of my father due to " tremens " and his conscience that Mr. John Bradford's importance in the community commenced to be generally recognised. He had been there for some time, but Washtucna, with a conservatism worthy of an older community, had omitted to take him to her heart. Now, however, in the comparative leisure of winter occupations, Washtucna had time to re-appraise her various inhabitants. When she came to list John Bradford's good qualities and sum up his virtues, she realised that, led astray by an entirely proper conservatism in matters of dress, she had underestimated the man. To recite a complete roster of his charms would be tedious. Certain of his points were, however, unanimously admired; first, in particular, the cool courage which had enabled him to decline Scoop and Alva's urgent, revolver-adorned invitation to dance; second, his surprising faculty of staying on bucking horses, a faculty not in the least expected in a man wearing English riding trousers; third, the barrel full of money which he had brought out from the East and with which he was now buying land; and fourth, and perhaps most potent of all, for Washtucna was not jealous, Mrs. Clarke seemed to trust him.

There were, I need not remark, people who saw other virtues in Mr. Bradford: the ladies, for ex-

ample, who were charmed by the romantic stories which circulated to explain why so handsome and wealthy and well bred a young man left Vermont to come to Washtucna. Not that Mr. Bradford was much comfort to these ladies, however, for, save to Sarah Clarke, he was to women of about the same degree of reticence as Mr. V. Y. Trillums. Then there was Mr. J. Stilson who, as educational expert of the town, pointed to Mr. John Bradford as a fine example of educated man. This would have made Bradford curse, but he never heard it.

Altogether Mr. Bradford was getting on very well, and, as he was really an intelligent person, he saw it, and, as he was ambitious, he resolved to get along better. There was still, he knew, a faint general prejudice against him due to his friendship for high collars, pointed toed shoes and boiled shirts. Why not remove it? Why not achieve a perfect popularity? Perhaps one could some day use it. He was not too cold-blooded about all this, he exercised but common sense.

Mr. Bradford, having made up his mind, shortly set to work in a businesslike way to remove these lingering feelings of resentment, not by conformity to Washtucna's habits of dress but in even more effective ways, for Washtucna liked free men. First he purchased a complete set of band instruments for an organization to be called "Bradford's Washtucna Silver Cornet Band." Several tuneful young men joined him in this enterprise with enthusiasm and both *The Sun* and *The Breeze* referred to Bradford as a benefactor and philanthropist. Over this Sarah Clarke and Bradford laughed heartily. He was a

sane, healthy man with no illusions as to his unselfishness, but he could see a joke. His band exists to this day in name. Mayhap in it the name John Bradford has gained a qualified eternal life. It is like having a lake named after you — but even to have a lake named for you is to have your name live but a day. The cycle of the ages is long; that is why we call it eternity. Lakes live but a day and then dry up.

We may at least say, however, that John Bradford's name still is alive in Washtucna long years after he has returned to Vermont, taking with him four barrels of money for the one he brought. And he took a wife, too; but we shall get to that later.

There were still intransigent folk who were not converted to John Bradford. They speculated on exactly what crime he had committed in Vermont and predicted that he would be hanged and that they would help. But to most people what John Bradford had done in the past mattered not and they were indifferent as to what previous wrestling matches he had held with the law. They found him square and satisfactory and they liked him.

Those hearts that were not softened toward John Bradford either by already listed virtues, his pleasing personality or the discordant and persuasive music of his band, were finally completely won by those twin strokes of genius, "The Widows' Endowment Fund of Washtucna" and the "Washtucna Bank": one appealing to hardheaded people with money and the other to philanthropic people without money, of which latter there are a surprising number in every community.

The Bank came before the Endowment Fund. I have called it a stroke of genius: it was also in its popular phases an accident. Washtucna had not a bank. Bradford decided to start one because he believed it would pay and he decided to install it in the corner room of Washtucna's first brick building, which, in the intervals between cold spells, was then being erected. Washtucna was watching the progress of what *The Breeze* called "this handsome masonry structure" with tears in the municipal eyes. At the news that a bank was to inhabit it she became somewhat hysterical, it was too much joy; she even broke loose noisily with fire arms again until Mr. V. Y. Trillums shot a man in the groin. This cooled Washtucna's head and she again became law abiding.

"The Widows' Endowment Fund" came later. Like the bank, it was started by Mr. Bradford for personal reasons. In consultation with Doc Punts and Mr. Skookum Jones, it was decided that Sarah Clarke's health no longer warranted her slave-like industry. The Widows' Endowment Fund was conceived as a diplomatic method of rendering her assistance. John Bradford started it, as I have noted, for personal reasons. He endowed it with an annual income from a tidy number of Washtucna's municipal bonds, which, of course, were gilt edge. The bank was to administer the funds and the proceeds were to go to the widows of Washtucna. He then permitted other people to contribute. Mrs. Sarah Clarke was, at the time, the sole possible beneficiary; the call was irresistible. Washtucna threw up its hat and turned its pockets inside out. It really looked as though the

widows of Washtucna would, in the future, be its wealthiest inhabitants if they were not careful.

Mr. Bradford became, after that, a type of popular hero; he was eulogised more fervently than ever by both *The Sun* and *The Breeze* and his generosity was emulated until the endowment funds available for expenditure during the coming year were almost doubled. Thereafter, until his departure, Mr. John Bradford was the most prominent citizen of Washtucna. And his name still exists not only in the band but in Bradford Avenue and the "Bradford Endowment Fund," which has become permanent.

Mr. Bradford was too agressive to ever rest contented. He fortified his position by out-smoking, out-drinking and out-working his townsmen and by showing more attention to Mrs. Sarah Clarke than any one else, more, even, than Punts or Jones. Also, he showed his belief in Washtucna's future by lending money shrewdly on all manner of property and by buying hundreds of acres of rich black land at the ridiculously low figures then current. This active optimism was considered a virtue amongst virtues and, indeed, it was nothing else. So is every form of optimism. The object of life is to do something. However, in the long run Mr. Bradford was paid for this virtue, for twenty years afterwards his great land holdings were sold at such a figure as to fill the four barrels already mentioned with real money. This is always the case when it does not fail to be the case. Virtue is its own reward and sometimes it gets other rewards, too.

It was fortunate for Sarah Clarke that this endow-

ment fund came into existence (and that is why it did), for as the winter advanced she became so weak and wan that a continuation of work was utterly impossible. Yet she persisted against accepting its help to the last possible moment, finding it difficult, I suppose, to give up the figment of independence; and it was only at the authoritative command of A. J. Punts, M.D., that she stopped her mending work forever. Cam and I were in the house that morning, hugging the kitchen stove, because it was cold, and we saw her make her gestures of acceptance to Punts; just a twist of her mouth, a jerk of the shoulders and a despairing droop of the head.

"I suppose I might as well eat from Washtucna's company table as to steal from her cook," she said faintly and softly, but a little bitterly, from her small rocking chair. "I suppose I might as well."

Punts patted her on the back. "Washtucna is tickled, ma'm," he said cheerfully; "and it would be hurt if you didn't come through all right and take this, and so would Bradford, who says all this philanthropy Washtucna's pulling off is doing the place good. But he's plum down in despair to-day — and so's Skookum Jones and me, too, for that matter. You know we like that old codfish Jones."

"What is the matter?" asked Mrs. Clarke quickly, forgetting her own woes.

"Well, I tell you, Mrs. Clarke," said Punts, "she's this way: though Skookum ain't sayin' anything to you or anybody, he's made a plum fool of himself; which in some respects is the most sensible thing you can do. It may serve to while away the time."

"I understand — I know how to read a bull — go ahead!" said Mrs. Clarke, smiling. "What's the matter?"

I said I was Irish and understood bulls, too, but Punts went on without stopping to get me aboard his conversational boat.

"Well, as I say, Skookum's had a fine time being a fool through you bein' sick and not able to see him, but he ain't tellin' very much. Howsomever, old Gunnysack Charlie is. Gunny has been curryin' up Jones's horses for a livin', his gold dust from Seven Devils havin' all gone the way of flesh and Skookum havin' a lunatic disinclination to seein' the old sport starve. This morning Gunny tells me that it's he himself that invites Jones's attention to the beauty of that young lady at McPetherick's Tennessee Restaurant. And Gunny says just as soon as he mentions it to Skookum that old gentleman admires her right off; and that disregardin' that lady's unqualified attachment for Carl, which, as you know, ma'm, is Jan Havland's bar-keep, Skookum starts wooin' her. This is on account of you havin' sort of warmed his feelin' for the whole sex, you see. It's like you had started a fire and then it had got loose in bunch grass. Well, Skookum gets warmed up and he goes after the citadel of her affections by storm in that strenuous manner for which he's so famous — though he has not heretofore applied it to courtship except on you, where it wouldn't work. And he seems to captivate her, as it were, as he an' the young lady drives off hot-foot to Colfax by night, where they routs the parson out. And despite the unseemliness of the hour he hooks 'em double, sort o' in parallel, you see,

Mrs. Clarke, an' tells 'em to live happy ever after — which advice they disregard; disregard right away."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Mrs. Clarke sympathetically; "oh, it is *too* bad!"

"Well, you see old Gunnysack Charlie is cognizant of all these here exercises, as you might say," went on Punts. "He knows all about 'em and he keeps watchin' Mr. Bar-keep Carl, who don't seem to mind at all these carryin' ons; which surprises Gunnysack considerable as he knows human nature, which is similar to brute.

"Well, Mr. and Mrs. Jones they came back the night before last and we all have a big shiveree, which we want to start 'em right and we done so. Mebbe you heard the noise — but no, you didn't; it was the night you took the sleepin' stuff.

"This forenoon what happens? I guess the girl finds herself with a big bag of Skookum's coin, as per plan, so she strolls around and pretty soon she sights Carl and she takes up with that sneakin' square-head again, and while Carl abandons his profess'nal clothes she hires one of Carroll's rigs. Then she picks up Carl on the corner and they skin out, vamoose for good, taking a long sack of Skookum's money which he has fatuously give the female.

"Well, Gunnysack has seen all this and he don't lose any time finding Bradford, who's buying a big piece of land some place, which is his favourite occupation nowadays. He nods his head and says very mild and soft, 'Saddle both my horses and you come with me and leave word for Skookum to follow. It's a damn shame!'

"Which Gunnysack was glad to do as he's highly

indignant at having Skookum swindled. It was all done as Bradford says except that Skookum did not follow, he came right with them.

"They caught them down near Robard's and Gunnysack says Carl and the female was considerable scairt; which I reckon is true as I'd have been also or anybody. Bradford has 'em disembark and then he slaps Carl on each side of the face and walks up and down and talks to 'em on morality and such things. And then what do you guess he did? — old Skookum standin' by all the time, ma'm, for he's an old man."

Mrs. Clarke at this stage wondered aloud if Mr. Bradford had killed one or both the traitors and she wondered what poor old Skookum had done besides sit still.

"Bradford killed neither!" said Punts triumphantly. "Neither — he gives 'em a present of some money on his own account and kicks Carl and takes Skookum's money back and returns it to Skookum and then comes home."

"And I suppose all Washtucna is laughing at poor Skookum," said Mrs. Clarke a little bitterly. "I suppose if the poor old man had broken his arm in addition to the rest of the damage he received that they'd die laughing. I suppose —"

"Ma'm," said Punts in rather hurt tones, "you're mistaken a heap. Washtucna never liked Skookum Jones like it does now. We all in this town can understand a gent that way, who gets tangled up and tripped by his own picket lines. I reckon most of us have been throwed ourselves. Anyway there ain't been any joshin' talk at all, and won't be. And

if this snake Carl ever crawls back they'll tar and feather him, if they're not so carried away by enthusiasm as to hang him. And besides, ma'm, John Bradford and I have taken a solemn oath to seriously mangle anybody who cracks a joke on this subject. He's a fine sport, old Skookum is; and, besides, Washtucna ain't any tea-party for idle gossip. No, sir!"

"I wish," said Mrs. Clarke presently, "that you'd ask Mr. Jones to come see me a moment when he has leisure. Does he seem much worried?"

"Certainly, ma'm," grated Punts good-naturedly, pulling his beard until it should have come out by the roots. "Yes, he feels rotten all right. Love ain't any joke."

With that Punts left and very soon afterwards Mr. Bradford came to the door. To the most casual glance he was different from other Washtucnans; cleaner cut, sharper, better trained, better taught, more confident, yet less self assertive; in short more highly civilised.

"May I come in?" he asked pleasantly. "I have not seen you for a week."

"Ye-es — please do; I wanted to see you. I wanted to talk of the Widows' Endowment Fund. I don't see how —"

"It's this way, Mr. Clarke," said he incisively; "my part in it was only the beginning and I started it for personal reasons. It suits me to be popular in this town and this endowment fund is a sure method by which to get popularity. It's pure business. You need have no hesitancy about taking the stuff. I buy what I want in what appears a good

market, that's all.— And I can afford it," he added apologetically. " Maybe I'll want to be Senator out here some day; you can't tell. You just take it and give me the popularity."

" I suppose you've heard of Skookum's marriage," he said presently with a faint smile.

" Yes, and I am sorry: he's a fine little man. Perhaps it is best this way, though. It seems so to me now. Perhaps they could never have been very comfortable married."

" Certainly," said he, " it's much better this way. He's all right now and I think he won't need to be that kind of a fool again. But," he went on whimsically, " it is not like me. I've been all the kinds of fool already, so perhaps I can be sensible always after this."

Which whimsical guess at the future proved about correct. I never knew him to execute anything extensively unfortunate or unintelligent. But I believe he had really messed up his young manhood a good deal.

That afternoon the first instalment of funds from the Widows' Endowment arrived and Sarah Clarke took to her bed where she should have been for a month.

In the municipal election which occurred soon afterwards Mr. Bradford was elected mayor, vice A. J. Punts, who refused to allow his name to be put up for a second term. This post Mr. Bradford held until he returned to Vermont with the before mentioned barrels of money (or their equivalent on paper) and the wife — but we anticipate again. The Widows' Endowment Fund had served its prime pur-

poses: Mrs. Sarah Clarke had been persuaded to rest and John Bradford had been made mayor by it.

But poor Skookum Jones's outlay of affection had brought him no return whatever. Which should teach us not to save our affections too much for use in old age. Yet I take it back: it had brought him something. It made him step very briskly and wear his plug hat at a rakish angle. He was the very devil of a fellow.

CHAPTER XVIII

THERE is no doubt whatever that Mrs. Clarke occupied in a sense an official position in Washtucna, though the position had no name. She was consulted in a variety of affairs: professionally by Punts, M.D., and politically and personally by the new mayor, Mr. Bradford; and, indeed, for heaven knows what reasons by about every male and female in Washtucna. No doubt the responsibilities of these various posts had some part in preventing her from giving in to sickness long before she did.

Punts was now greatly concerned about Mrs. Clarke's health though she did not constantly keep to her bed. But, despite her weakness, when the great housewarming party was given shortly before Christmas by Cayuse Jimmy Mohundro at the opening of his new house on Dutch Flat, Dr. Punts having recommended recreation, Mayor Bradford took Mrs. Clarke down as official lady representative of the town. And in Washtucna Christmas festivities she again bore a prominent part. Probably Washtucna could have existed without Sarah Clarke, but at that time no Washtucnan would have admitted it; least of all that firm trio of friends, Bradford, Punts and Jones.

" Cayuse Jimmy's party furnished a delightful if hilarious entrance into the holiday festivities," said

The Washtucna Breeze. This party was distinguished amongst other things for the wide variety of the guests and for their spirited conduct. As Mr. Gunnysack Charlie expressed it, "All the gintry av the Palouse Country was there besides siveral others and mesilf and they behaved rotten." But the wide variety in company was not appreciated by people generally. Indeed, I suppose to all persons except Sarah Clarke and John Bradford it seemed an entirely normal party.

Mayor Bradford came for Sarah Clarke in the only two-seated cutter in the Palouse Country, to which he had hooked up his own beautiful Hamiltonian horses. It was bitterly cold but he wrapped us all in fur robes, stowed Cam and me behind and went off like the wind over the billowy white hills which were flooded with moonlight. The coyotes cried on the hilltops, the horses' breaths froze on the fur robes, the tongues of the sleigh bells grew faint with frozen vapour, and then suddenly we were in front of a big log house blazing with light and up and down and around were blanketed and unblanketed horses and ponies and mules tied to every conceivable stationary object on the ranch. From inside came a persuasive squeaking of fiddles, a shuffle of feet and a medley of voices. Oh, it was excessively gay and I wished I had stayed at home, for I saw that it would be utterly impossible to enter the door into that great crowd inside.

They made way, however, and welcome for Sarah Clarke and while she talked with people, Cam and I slipped off to one side between the redhot stove and a big fireplace: one was for looks, one for heat. Peo-

ple had come far to Cayuse Jimmy's party, for Jimmy was a famous man. There was Nesepelim Charlie Smith, an able and an honourable man. Nesepelim was by religion a Mormon and he had two squaws, both of whom he had brought seventy miles on pony back to attend this fine party. Then there was Nez Perce Smith, who was Nesepelim's cousin, and there were the Rushers and Beauclercs and Frenchy Clemens with his Irish wife and a flock of gaunt and hungry looking children. All these and many more Cayuse Jimmy and his wife, who was a quarter Cœur d'Alene, welcomed vociferously. Cayuse and his wife made a picturesque receiving party, as he for the occasion had refused to don any garb other than his usual flannel shirt, lace boots and corduroys, whereas his wife eclipsed past, present and future Palouse gowns by one which, if not from Paris, was at least from Chicago or Spokane or Washtucna: anyway she had not made it herself.

There were many amongst those present, however, who considered that Sarah Cameron Clarke was, in her modest black, still the most beautiful person in the room. And, in plain truth, I suppose she had not ever looked better. There was just a rose flush of colour in her thin cheeks, her gray-mottled eyes were brilliantly lustrous with excitement and the background of things made her appearance ten times more striking. She was highly civilised, while the people about her were, in a sense, of the barbarians. Yet the dress was of all sorts: people in long boots, people in " shaps " and flannels and buckskin, people in plain sack suits and, finally, there was John Bradford, cap-a-pie, in perfect evening dress.

Sarah Clarke danced once with Bradford, I think, and once she rolled through a riotous quadrille with Cayuse Jimmy himself. The rest of the time she just talked with people, and her conversation was as light and bright as sea foam in sunlight; but it too swiftly changed from one thing to another to be remembered except as a zig-zag path of light. And yet it was pitched just right, pitched so that the person to whom she talked understood.

We went home after a while and to bed. When we awoke in the morning Washtucna had a new disease, a new fever. She was always sudden. Now she was simply sick with a desire to celebrate Christmas as handsomely as Cayuse Jimmy had celebrated his house-warming. She must be munificent in it. Why not give everything to Christmas? was her first idea. Why not have a celebration on a scale never before dreamed of?

And then partizan spirit burst forth again. And the churches were not the parties to the rivalry. It was the Saints and Sinners who were. Judge Rusher clubbed together with his clansmen the Sinners and Mr. Beauclerc clubbed with the Saints. Both clans put in money as freely as though it had been a benefit for Sarah Clarke, for nothing can be done any place without money. And then they sent teams twenty miles through the cold and snow for Christmas trees and evergreen branches. The journeys of those teams were epic: they broke their own roads through the high piled drifts of the foothills and then with a last burst of effort their drivers pushed forward on snowshoes over the crisp crust and dragged down the snow laden pines by main strength across gulch and

hill. It was of a piece with the Crusades and there was about the same amount of Christian purpose in the background of it: just an immense, immediate liking for the grotesque, the romantic, the adventurous and the sentimental.

Ironically enough it was the Sinners who secured the use of the church for their tree and it was the Saints who took over the fraternal hall above Jan Havland's saloon.

It having been decided by common consent that giving Christmas parties should be a competitive function, it had immediately become a point of honour with each side to secure the largest and most perfect tree, the handsomest and most tasteful decorations and the richest and most numerous presents. And later there would of course arise the equally important questions of which party was most largely attended and which Santa Claus had the largest paunch and the jolliest voice. Of course no accurate measurements or counts would ever be taken on these points; Washtucna would prefer to dispute about them for months afterwards on purely general grounds. She would no more consent to measure such things than to count a young girl's eyelashes or calculate the force with which a baby grips its father's thumb. Fancy the sacrilege of laying a tape line on the belly of Santa Claus.

Competition did its best and then a voice of sanity issued from an entirely unexpected throat and suggested co-operation. If it had come with warning Washtucna would have disregarded the voice, for on principle Washtucna disliked co-operation and would have been prepared to argue it down. But it

did not. It was Miss May Caylor who spoke. At about the last noon before Christmas Eve, she appeared, wearing her brightest colours of gown and complexion, before a committee of leading Saints which was sitting in consultation in the room over Jan Havland's saloon making final plans.

Miss Caylor's appearance was unexpected, for women of her trade, even in Washtucna, were not supposed to be much interested in Christmas trees. The men shuffled uneasily: some of them had wives who would not understand such interviews. Miss Caylor sat down and lighted a cigarette. Mr. Beauclerc frowned, stood up, put both hands in his hip pockets and asked her with solemn courtesy how " we can serve you." Miss Caylor crossed her knees and inhaled deeply of her cigarette.

" Gents," said she calmly, " these are going to be the damnedest Christmas trees I've ever seen. Who are they for anyway? That's what I ask. For what purpose are they erected? Who's to get the benefit? "

Mr. Beauclerc remarked suavely that the Saints' tree, at least, was mainly for the children.

Miss Caylor flared up. " For the children, eh? So that's the reason you have two of 'em simultaneous, so the children can't see but one. And there ain't but about thirty kids near Washtucna anyway, which is just enough to have fun; an' you'll keep half of 'em separate from the other half, sort of to make 'em good an' lonesome I s'pose. Why in hell fire don't you have 'em sequently? one after the other, so's all the kids can go to all the trees? Now, gents,

why don't you? — as one commonsense sport to another, why don't you?"

The Saints' committee saw the point. Mr. Beauclerc mumbled sort of an approval. "Naturally," said he, ending severely, "naturally, however, I'm opposed to those evil-doing cattle —"

"Cut it out!" said Miss Caylor disgustedly, and she took out a powder puff and smeared her nose rather ungracefully, "cut it out! Suppose I were to fix up such arrangements of co-operation with these Sinner bums, will you stay with me? Will you make good?" She lighted her cigarette again and again crossed her legs in a way more instructive to anatomists than pleasing to a moralist.

The Saints said they would, and Miss Caylor by arts, subterfuges, fraud and other perfectly legitimate female weapons actually succeeded in less than an hour in making arrangements with Judge Rusher and the Sinners whereby these events, said the Judge, "will be pulled off in tandem" instead of side by side. "But you'll note," continued he, "that both of 'em are still hooked up to the chariot of Washtucna's happiness, which Washtucna loses nothing and the kids gain." And thereby the full glory of both these Christmas trees was guaranteed to every child in Washtucna. But I am told that two-thirds of the adult attendants at these festivals of "peace on earth" carried concealed weapons in order to be prepared for emergencies.

The question of which tree should be first stripped of its wealth was left to the arbitration of the dice box; and as Mr. Beauclerc threw four sixes to Judge

Rusher's four trays, the crowd, consisting of the whole town, appeared first in Havland's Hall and later at the Methodist Church.

Christmas Eve was as clear and as excessively cold as it should be and Washtucna, as I have implied, without any exception whatever, attended the Christmas trees. There were absolutely no absentees, not even Jan Havland or his bar-keeper or Miss May Caylor. It is true, however, that these three persons sat together in a somewhat embarrassed loneliness, which was enhanced when Miss May Caylor, who was the only grown person to receive a present from the Saints' tree, was presented with a locket and chain. As this present was being bestowed by the hand of Santa Claus himself, that pleasant old gentleman spoke in the voice of Mr. Tinling, the station agent, a few words of explanation of the unusual honour which was being conferred. These remarks, I need not relate, had not the general approval of the married ladies of Washtucna, as married ladies in general are absolutely opposed to any kindness to May Caylors.

"Gents and ladies," said he in a frank voice, "Santa Claus has found this article yere, in his pack, which it was put in by accident on purpose on account of her noble idea of despatching this Christmas festivity as two trains with a reasonable interval between 'em, instead of tryin' to run 'em both on the same track simultaneously, which would result in more or less ditching both trains, to the great inconvenience of the children, which are the real passengers, as a fellow might say. Miss Caylor, here's to you!"

Miss Caylor received the present with perfect composure, while several of the younger children expressed wonder at the remarkable mimical powers possessed by a Santa Claus who could " talk exactly like Mr. Tinling," and it showed Santa Claus liked Mr. Tinling and they did too.

Cam and I were sitting between Sarah Clarke and big John Bradford, which latter person was, to our intense admiration, again in evening dress. " This," said Sarah Clarke, " is rather better than I thought human nature could do — do not you think so? Did you think respectable people would allow each other to be decent this way? Doesn't this town out-do itself? It is almost Christian."

The first party being finished, the company presently adjourned to the new church, which was the old school house, where the Sinners' tree, as radiant as tinsel and light can be, was waiting. As the party walked along, singularly but none the less easily and naturally Sarah Clarke fell into step with Miss Caylor and they chatted like old friends, while John Bradford and Cam and I walked behind. What Washtucnans thought of it I know not, I only can guess.

Again we came in, in clouds of steam, from the frigid ice and snow garbed world to the warm region near the great box stove. Again the children were smothered with presents; never were such rich children, rich past belief. There was everything: clothing and boots and toys and candy — everything a child could desire and some things which were better than desirable, things which were useful. Best of all for me and my brothers and sisters was clothing.

We were warmly clad for the rest of that winter and that is a blessing, indeed, past understanding to him who has never been cold. And, again, as before, Santa Claus came down personally to Miss May Caylor and this time he had a book for her. That lady upon hearing her name again called for a present quite lost the cool composure which she had hitherto maintained. It was one stroke of kindness too much. She grew very pale, tears rolled down her face and then in a great fit of sobbing she fled the room. Cam and I did not understand, but we noticed that hers were not the only tears, that John Bradford's face was set very hard and that many men shuffled their feet uneasily, that others swore softly and gently and that a general air of sympathy and warmth and kindness seemed drawing every one together — drawing to all of us poor Miss May Caylor, who had fled home through the bitter night. Even married women felt it — indeed, Washtucna was kind-hearted and generous.

Outside, after we had sung the last hymn and had said good night, we found it snowing a powdery snow. The wind came in strong and stronger gusts, searching you through and through, penetrating to your very heart. Already the drifts were piling high. We all paused in the hallway, looking out critically and appraising the weather. Mr. Skookum Jones shook his head ominously. "She's bad lookin'," he said. "Nobody better ride far to-night; that's straight. As for me, I'm staying with McPetherick; no ten miles for me. 'Tain't safe."

"No, you're not staying at a hotel, Mr. Skookum, you're coming home with us," cried fat Mrs.

Rusher; and, "You come with us, Mart!" whispered Cam. I nodded my head and told my sister Annie not to expect me home. We all started off and, as we went, I heard for a second my sister Mary's hard and knifelike cough. I did not understand it, but Sarah Clarke did and she winced.

We could feel the wind growing almost momentarily stronger and Sarah Clarke found the little walk so hard a fight that big John Bradford finally picked her up as you would a child and swung off, with Cam and me trotting to keep up. He put her down inside her own door, said good night rather gruffly and was off again into the wintry night. When we came to look at Sarah Clarke there was a look of singular exaltation on her thin face, hectic spots were in her cheeks and her eyes were as bright as the cold stars and as warm as young life itself.

All night the wind rattled fiercely at the casements and in the morning we looked out into the greatest blizzard the Palouse Country has ever seen. It was the top tide of elemental severity: the drifts piled higher and higher and the frosts drove us nearer and nearer to the great box stoves. You could not visit even your neighbours; but it was cosy and homelike, games by the fireside and talk and talk and Sarah Clarke with that new look on her face — and yet she looked thinner than ever, less of this earth. Trains ceased to run, stock starved and froze on the ranges; even the food supply of men ran low. Snow, snow, snow and frost extending forever.

CHAPTER XIX

THE spirit of genuine, unquestioning partizanship had really been rather weak in Washtucna's heart since the death of Jim Lent at the door of Jan Havland's saloon: the Christmas co-operation was an evidence of this. The cold of that winter finally froze this spirit to death. Nevertheless in the very end of the winter it temporarily rose again in such splendid vigour that for a time it threatened to throw Washtucna into internal war. This danger of war being suddenly extinguished by the nature of the circumstances, partizanship rapidly faded again and waned and this time when it died it was dead.

The immediate occasion of this last outburst of hostility was the loss by theft to Mr. Deep Creek Peterson of his beautiful Hamiltonian mare Nellie. I am, you see, laying the blame on the thief. I might lay it on Peterson, for it was considered inhuman by Palousers in those days to tempt men with such horse flesh as Nellie. But I absolve Peterson.

Nellie was taken from her barn one night late in February without, so far as witnesses could say, leaving any trace whatever as to where or with whom she had gone. Deep Creek Peterson was broken hearted. He had bred and raised her himself at his Creek ranch at great expense of time and trouble, and now he was at once as sorrowful, in-

dignant and vengeful as if you had taken away to slavery two or three of his numerous yellow-haired children. To indicate the extent of his sorrow he remarked some hundreds of times to every person he saw that "Nellie vas the look of mine eyes." And he often earnestly conversed upon the intensity of his desire to help hang the man who stole her.

Now Deep Creek Peterson was by politics and religion an ardent Sinner. He had not in the least slackened his enthusiastic partizanship. He was a Sinner for life, and so firm a one that next in his sturdy affections after his family and the mare Nellie came Judge Rusher and the whole institution of Sinnerdom. It was natural under such circumstances that he should suspect a Saint or Saints of having stolen his horse, and so it was natural also that he should go immediately to consult with Judge Rusher as to what steps looking to recovery and revenge he ought to take. Now it had happened that in the past Mr. Deep Creek Peterson had sojourned for a number of years in the pan-handle of Texas at a time when Mr. Bob Dalton, as a boy, was learning to punch cattle in that sunburned land. Deep Creek remembered, as he talked with Judge Rusher, that young Bob Dalton had been requested by a self-appointed committee to leave Texas on account of having been seen in earnest conversation with a man who was caught in the possession of a horse belonging to Alfalfa Bill Hayward of Waco — or some such person of some such place. This gentleman caught with the horse was very properly hanged at the suggestion of said self-appointed committee; but, as it was a merciful committee, Mr. Bob Dalton in

consideration of his youth and lack of guile was only requested to vamoose and to never talk to such people again.

Mr. Deep Creek Peterson as he prodded up his recalcitrant and soggy memory was further able to remember that there were not wanting people in Texas who, on the occasion of the above described events, had desired also to hang Mr. Bob Dalton on a chance. But you can not hang a child: a fact which Deep Creek now lamented to Judge Rusher in some rude similes, mentioning the killing of young rattlesnakes as virtuous acts.

All the above reminiscences were laid before Judge Rusher. To a Sinner the conclusion was perfectly logical that Mr. Bob Dalton, who was a Saint and a natural object of suspicion anyhow, had lifted Deep Creek's mare because he once in Texas had talked to a man who perhaps was a thief. Judge Rusher lamented the harsh conclusion, for he liked Bob Dalton; but he could not, of course, let small preferences stand in the way of duty, nor blind prejudice vote down clear eyed logic. No, sir! Of course he would see that Bob had a fair trial. He would concede a point: Bob should have a "legal" trial, an actual *legal* trial. He should be apprehended by the officers of the law and fairly tried and in due form; and the Judge's lips came together so tight that there was just a little blue line to show where they met. The Judge was a firm man, not to say stubborn, as you could see by this little blue line.

Mr. Sam Stimson was the sheriff and a Saint. By Judge Rusher's advice Deep Creek rode to Colfax to see and lay his case before Stimson. Now Stimson

had a Saint's prejudices instead of a Sinner's. And, indeed, it was rather a sickly case taken altogether; so Stimson laughed a good healthy laugh and said the whole complaint was ridiculous. Nevertheless, there was at that time one crime at which a Palouse county sheriff must not look lightly and that crime was horse stealing. You must give every man a good chance to be convicted, by himself or others, of horse stealing. Sam Stimson admitted this on second thought and said he would arrest Bob if Deep Creek desired it; but if no more substantial evidence were brought forth at the trial, he would arrange personally to have Mr. Peterson ridden on a rail and tarred and feathered. This he considered was but the plain duty of a fair minded sheriff. Mr. Peterson accepted the wager, as it were, with patient and gentle enthusiasm.

Sam Stimson was no laggard. That was one of the reasons he was sheriff. He was off on his famous roan horse that same afternoon and that night he had supper at the Tennessee Restaurant at Washtucna in the company of Mr. McPetherick and Doc Punts. He did not divulge to them his errand. Later he took two drinks at Jan Havland's, toasted himself at the stove and then cheerfully rode out into the crisp night towards Bob Dalton's little ranch. Bob Dalton lived two miles above Washtucna in Doncaster Gulch on the Spokane stage road.

Punts saw Stimson go up the stage road humming a song with that fine tenor voice so justly admired by his friends the ladies; and none in Washtucna that night ever saw him alive again. But as Tom War-

ren was riding horseback to Washtucna early next morning the mare Nan gave a great jump and a snort just as they crossed a little ravine. Tom was almost unseated. Glancing back he saw half buried in the snow, face downward, the heavily clad body of a man. It was gallant Sam Stimson's body and he lay about a half mile from Dalton's ranch, just where you turn off from the main road; and there were two revolver wounds on his body, both deadly.

Tom secured men to help and he and they brought the body into Washtucna. As the word of Tom's grim find went the rounds, armed men again flowed into the town. And now, though partizanship was deemed to be behind this death, Washtucna for the first time rose wholly above partizanship and asked with a hundred voices for plain and simple justice. There was now no thought or talk of Saints and Sinners amongst those who rode in through the melting and slushy snow that sunny afternoon, but they nevertheless all looked very determined and grim. A Saint sheriff was dead, a Sinner's horse was stolen, and without doubt these things were done by one and the same person. Also, to Washtucnans in general it seemed certain that the person must be Bob Dalton; so certain that although both Saints and Sinners liked him well, only those friends of Bab Dalton's heart, Pete Barker, Doc Punts and John Bradford, voiced their doubts.

Mr. Pete Barker opined in the face of the town that Bob was as "mild as milk and never killed no man," while Punts more boldly said the man lied who said Bob Dalton would murder Sam Stimson. John Bradford spoke earnestly everywhere and to

every one for a fair trial and time for mature consideration. "It is not only justice, it's business," he said; an argument which wins many so-called hard-headed people.

But extensive consideration and thought was not Washtucna's habit. She was violent. If anything were wrong she proposed to fix it at once. She was radical. Hence, in spite of John Bradford, the court of "Judge Lynch" was convoked and a committee of four was appointed to escort Mr. Dalton before the court for trial; the court to sit in Jan Havland's Hall over the saloon where but a little time back we had gathered for the Saints' Christmas tree; trial to take place that very night if the prisoner could be produced.

The messengers of the court found Mr. Bob Dalton without difficulty. He was sitting by his own bachelor fireside teaching a very little pig to do card tricks. He was greatly surprised, it appeared, at the errand of this party but he was mild and gentle and even cheerful and docile, which was a comfort to the committee, who had, as they approached, rather wondered which ones of them he would try to shoot first. And they had felt some concern, for he was a shamefully good shot. "Of co'se," said he in faint expostulation, "I'm an innocent pa'ty, but a co'te, as I understand jestice, is allus privileged to try any man it wants to: an' no one admires 'Judge Lynch' more'n me; no sir! I'll be with you all just directly." Having tied a bandana hankerchief around his neck with unusual care, adjusted a poker chip in the knot, combed his hair and plastered it down until his appearance was injured as much as possible, he

showed the gentlemen of the committee how Tim the pig could tell the three of hearts from the ace. Then he saddled his frozen eared pony Monté and trotted off more like the leader of the party than a prisoner.

When about a hundred yards distant from the house one of the committee as an afterthought asked Bob to turn over his revolvers. This he did very courteously and for a moment the committee felt shamefaced at the irregularity of the whole proceeding. There were two empty shells in one revolver, which Mr. Dalton said had been fired the night before at a most " annoyin' " coyote. But as it had so happened that Sam Stimson had been shot just twice, the committee looked at each other more grimly and spread around Bob, so that thereafter he looked more like a prisoner and less like the captain of the troop. There was naturally but little conversation, men were having their thoughts.

It was dark when the little cavalcade clattered in the cloud of its own vapour over Washtucna's frozen streets. Washtucna was quiet but populous with determined looking men and the court was already met and cleared for business. Bob Dalton appears to have been very unconcerned and cool as he arrived in town, but he was in no wise facetious. No doubt he realized his danger. He tied his own horse and led the way up the rickety stairs which were appended to the outside of Jan Havland's Hall to save space; and a great many men followed him up.

The court, which was composed more by accident than elsewise of twenty-one members, was seated at a long shining table dimly lighted by two oil lamps

requisitioned from Jan Havland's back rooms below. At the head of the table as " Judge Lynch " was Mr. Tom Woods, a bearded old pioneer, distinguished for his fairness, his taciturnity and his common sense, and not to a lesser extent for the extraordinary unkemptness of his person. The court room became very silent when Bob Dalton entered.

" Mr. Robert Dalton," said Tom Woods solemnly, " you'll excuse this court while it recites the case agin ye, which it's as follows. That you were onct a Texan but were driv from that State on account of keepin' associates with hoss-thieves. Now a hoss has been cut out an' run off from Mr. Deep Creek Peterson's ranch, which this here community figgers out you have absorbed in accordance with habits acquired in Texas: and it accuses you of it. Further, it is held to be a fair certain surmise that you shot up Sheriff Stimson last night as he was comin' to arrest you for complicity in the felonious proceedin's connected with Peterson's hoss. Which shootin' is the cause of Sam Stimson dyin' and lyin' in the snow ontil discovered by Tom Warren this mornin'. And further yet, on bein' rounded up you all's gun has two empty shells, which is the number of holes discerned in Stimson deceased, which you account for by sayin' you been shootin' coyotes and which this court holds to be ridiculous and not so."

There was some shuffling and changing of positions, at the end of which John Bradford and Pete Barker were observed to have taken station on either side of the accused and close to him. Mr. Bob Dalton was somewhat pale but when he spoke his voice was firm and unshaken.

"Gents," said he deliberately with a faint smile, "I admit I'm from Texas, which if it's a crime it will reduce the population of the world a heap, for they are Texans scattered around everywhere. And I admit that in my childhood I once talked to a hoss-thief there and was permitted to vamoose instead of bein' hung, which act of extraordinary mercy I s'pose has been recollected by Mr. Deep Creek Peterson himself. As for bein' the reg'lar consort of that hoss-thief, it ain't so. I was just ign'rant an' didn't know a hoss-thief from a badger, which this community is sim'lar. As f'r stealin' Deep Creek's hoss, I didn't ever do it. I was stayin' in my own shack trainin' my pig Tim, which I could prove an alibi, as the lawyer sharps say, if I had Tim trained up high enough to talk; but I ain't that far along with him yet. Likewise with last night; I was home, except that just before sunset I lopes across towards Pine Creek feelin' sort of stagnant, like an old mud hole, as it were, from the mental effort of trainin' Tim; and Monté, which is my Kuetin, my cayuse, as you might say, only he's mustang, scares up a coyote, at which I shoots twice and misses both shots, bein' poor shootin', too. And them is the missin' bullets which this co'te's sagacity has ferreted out, but they never came nigh Sam Stimson, who was a pal of mine, and respected and well liked by me as by other people. I may say, however, that about eight o'clock last night, as I was smokin' and readin' last week's paper agin for the fifth time, I hears two additional shots, which come from the road, apparently, but I give 'em no heed, sayin' the boys are shootin' off some insulators from the telegraph poles. And

I go to bed. And them, I anticipate, are the shots which get Sam, which I wish I had knowed it then; in which case I might of brought in the real crim'nal instead of bein' brung in myself.

"And now, gents, these are facts. I regret it a heap if they don't impress the co'te with my innocence the same as they do me. The same, I realize, may result in me bein' hanged, and I have no hesitation in sayin' that I hav made other plans for my life, which hangin' would interfere with. Therefore, I may say I'll protest on this hangin' business, though if the co'te don't heed my protest I don't bear no malice or harbour hatred, as I realize that my facts ain't exactly inspiritin'. Further, I would say that if there is any doubt in the minds of the co'te that can be cleared that way, I'll give my personal guarantee that my words is true and sound and without defects, that I never stole that hoss and never shot Sam Stimson."

He sat down on a high stool amidst a buzz of interest. His last words had probably impressed the court more in his favour than anything else he or any one had said. Bob Dalton's "guarantee" was ordinarily considered to be worth face value. "I don't rec'lect that Bob ever lied to anybody," commented Mr. Skookum Jones thoughtfully, and several other members had a similar thought in mind. Still, there was the evidence; it was strong, and the court remembered very clearly that Sam Stimson's charming personality was wiped off the slate of human affairs.

"All gents not actually servin' on this court will clear out, givin' opportunity for deliberation and cogitation," announced Mr. Woods. "The prison-

er'll be guarded by the committee which has captured him, and they'll wait down in Jan Havland's."

Obedient to this decree, the interested spectators were cast out into the chilly streets, while the court deliberated.

CHAPTER XX

THE foregoing events had woven themselves into the fabric of Washtucna's history without the cognizance of Cam or me. Our nose for news for once missed a scent. We had not heard or seen a thing of the trial, and I am able to describe it in such detail only by consulting old files of *The Washtucna Breeze* and *The Sun,* both of which publications reported the happenings with a fidelity much at variance with their usual habit; for, as I have remarked, the trial was not a partizan affair.

That Cam and I missed these events is due to the excellent skating, and the same cause had kept us from school. We were betrayed by the hardness and smoothness of the ice. We had successfully played hooky from school all day and at night, when we came home, we gobbled some food and were off again to Mr. Barker's pond. But we never arrived there. We heard voices in Jan Havland's Hall and saw lights and we decided to have a look, lest we miss something better than skating.

We approached the hall just as the court was being cleared for deliberation. The first persons we saw were Bob Dalton and his guard of four men, into whose hands certain alert persons had slipped double barrelled shotguns. Bob had been handcuffed. He came down the rickety stairs in somber silence, his sombrero pulled low over his eyes. Behind this

party came the spectators, twenty or thirty of them, and they, also, were silent. We were approaching at a critical time. Of course, we did not know what was happening, but we surmised that Bob Dalton was in danger, and, for my part, I know a great lump stuck in my throat, for I liked Bob Dalton exceedingly well.

We saw Gunnysack Charlie in the crowd and we pulled him aside and around the corner, and asked what was wrong. "What are they doing to Bob?"

Gunnysack took fifteen minutes to fill and light his pipe. I would have choked him had I been able; but I was not, so I waited.

"I tell ye," said he deliberately, "I tell ye, bhoys, they are sayin' he swiped Deep Creek Peterson's bay mare, the ball faced wan, and that he shot Sam Stimson —"

"Shot who?" I asked, horrified.

But Cam grasped my arm before I could get an answer. "Come on quick, Mart! the shots we heard last night — remember — and Whitey McGrath; he's here now, right over there! Le's see Doc Punts quick!" and he pulled me off while Gunnysack looked at us in astonishment.

"What's the matter wi' ye wee divils, ye?" he called, but we were gone.

Fortune favoured us, for we almost immediately ran into Punts and John Bradford. They were talking, and it was earnest talk. We stopped them, but we were so frightened and breathless that at first we could not speak. Bradford waited while Punts leered, pulled his long beard to one side and grinned a hideous and sorrowful grin at us.

"Is Mrs. Clarke all right?" asked Bradford uneasily.

"Yes, sir," said Cam breathlessly, and I let him talk. "But last night when we were coming home from Barker's pond where we'd been skating — it was about seven o'clock and bright moonlight, and first we met Whitey McGrath going up the road this side of Bob Dalton's on a bald faced horse and then just in a minute we heard two shots and somebody called, but we didn't —"

Punts listened no further. He dragged us both upstairs and strode unannounced into the court room, John Bradford close behind. We were dazzled and embarrassed and frightened.

"Gents," said Punts, "these young fellows here have some interesting experiences to recount, which are germane, as I might say, to the principles of justice in this case."

"Bring in the accused! the court is open," said Mr. Woods very promptly, not in the least disturbed by the interruption.

Bob Dalton, the guards and the audience came in. "It seems to me," said Mr. Pete Barker when he saw Cam and me, "that the tender age of these chillurn unfits 'em for such stern spectacles as this, Mr. Woods. Are they jest here as spectators?"

"Gents of the court," interrupted Punts in his grating voice, "these boys have garnered up some knowledge in this case which is considerable in excess of anything produced by witnesses heretofore heard. If the court will ask 'em questions I expect the path of justice will be considerably lubricated. And in the meantime I ask the court to indulge me by not

going off at half cock and I also ask it to authorise a couple of competent citizens to arrest Mr. Whitey McGrath, who is now taking a drink below, and bring him up here, as he'll be needed sure. And also I'm just now embarking on a few minutes of medical research work on this case. But as I'll be back in fifteen minutes or thirty, I'd like the court to stay proceedings for me if necessary."

"O.K., Doc," said Mr. Woods pleasantly; both he and the court were interested by the turn of events. "O.K., Doc, we'll wait. And now you all boys set down there quiet and nice and tell this here body of gents what you know about this case, and be real careful to be truthful, for it's important."

I was rattled. I could not have spoken to save my life. But Cam, as usual, was rather self-possessed, although I did see him swallow extra hard.

"Well, it's this way," said he, and he swallowed again; "it's like this: Mart and Sandy and I had been skating last night on Barker's pond, and afterwards we walked home on the stage road. Bimeby we heard a horse coming, and as it was white, bright moonlight, we could see when he came up that it was Whitey McGrath on a bald faced horse."

"Did this horse have any marks of a recognitory nacher?" asked Mr. Deep Creek Peterson with interest.

"She had one white fore-foot," I inserted; "yes, sir, one white fore-foot, the left un; it looked like a white sock; and she was goin' like the wind, lickety-split—" to illustrate her speed I held out my dirty chapped hand and opened and shut it several times rapidly, which was the accepted gesture among Pa-

louse small boys to indicate rapid riding. The court, and even Mr. Bob Dalton, laughed grimly.

"Well, what then?" asked Mr. Woods, vigorously biting the end off a black cigar, "what then, boys? What became of him. Did you see any more?"

"Well, sir," continued Cam, "we went along towards home and pretty soon we heard two shots from up on the road where Mr. Bob Dalton's road turns off, though we could not be sure just where."

"It seems to me it must a been awful moonlight to see that mare's sock so clear," criticised Skookum Jones mildly.

"Oh, yes, sir, it was," agreed Cam; "oh, yes, sir; for Sandy Rusher read a poem backwards by the moonlight, keeping a frozen egg on his wart, which Mr. Gunnysack Williams says will make 'em come off."

The court smiled again and Mr. Gunnysack looked embarrassed. He had not intended to make this valuable prescription public.

Then the court made me tell it. Then they made me tell part and Cam part; and then they sent one of us out of the room at a time. I fancy we were pretty close to agreeing, which I now think was a good record, better than two ordinary stupid grown people can do, for it's hard to tell exactly the truth. Whitey McGrath was brought in, but they sent him out until we had finished, because they said he might frighten us by his looks. This, I believe to have been an irregular proceeding, but "Judge Lynch" could be as irregular as he liked.

As we were finishing, Doc Punts burst exultantly

into the room, his face wreathed in a huge, sardonic, devilish smile. It must have grown colder, for I remember that a cloud of mist followed him in. Feeling the chill, some one slammed the door hastily, and another person heaved a log into the big stove, while still another turned the light higher so that everything seemed more cheerful.

Punts placed his bony hands on his bony hips, elbows akimbo like the washwomen who existed before the advent of the steam laundry. He glared at the court triumphantly.

"Gents," said he, "I see these boys have given you the right prescription, yes, sir; and now I will give you a chaser which will introduce science into these investigations. Punts, M.D., is vindicated. I have, from the first, recognised the impossibility of my friend, Bob Dalton, making a larceny sport out of himself and afterwards shooting an officer of the law from behind. Such a charge refutes itself in a brain of perspicacity. But I was nonplussed, for not knowing the exact proof of my views. These boys furnish the foundation and Providence casts 'em into my hand for its own purposes. I presents 'em to you. They gives you the truth, the foundation truth; me they give a hunch which I follow and bet on, so I can supply the superstructure to the evidence.

"Gents, I am just now returned from examining the corporeal remains of Sam Stimson until I found this bullet, which has lodged under a scapular after doing its deadly work. I cuts it out and brings it over and this is it. Now I need hardly point out to this intelligent and experienced community that she is calibre forty-four. And I invite your attention with

this in mind to the fact that Bob's revolver with the empty shell in it is calibre thirty-eight. Which statement I ask the court to check and confirm. And in the meantime, recollecting the value of time, I suggest allowing Mr. Pete Barker and the marshal to bring Whitey McGrath before the court, as I reckon they're getting cold outside as it's frosty. Which we'd like to have the opportunity of examining *his* guns."

The court sighed and squeaked its chair legs in interest and approval and the air became thicker and thicker with tobacco smoke. The intensity of the court's interest seemed to be capable of measurement by the vigour of their smoking.

"Sure, bring the skunk!" "Sure!" "Sure!" "You bet!" called various voices, for Whitey was no favourite. "And don't let him escape; ammunition is cheaper'n rope," added another. But nobody smiled. The court was very much in earnest; it could no longer take a joke.

While some one called and while we heard the shaky steps creaking, I waited in strained expectancy. I was afraid of Whitey, but Cam seemed perfectly self-possessed. A number of the court took occasion at this time to nod at Bob Dalton kindly and others to shake his hand and slap his back. Cam went up and shook his hand like a little old grown person and Bob shook it back most fervently and tears rolled down his face. "By jumping John Robinson, you and Mart saved my life, sure."

Then Whitey McGrath came in and it all became so silent that you could hear the fire roar up the rusty stove pipe. He came in with Mr. Pete Barker's

revolver covering the small of his back. At first he seemed very little in fear, very little impressed. He was just sullen and he growled and cursed and cast savage glances at Cam and me. Personally I felt like lying and telling the court it was all a mistake, for I suspected that Whitey would kill us. But it was too late for that. Well, I would try to die right.

"Which the court will examine the gent's weapons," said Mr. Woods sharply. Mr. Barker promptly laid Whitey's guns on the table. Mr. Woods opened them. They were calibre forty-four. No mistake about that. Mr. Woods thereupon briskly informed Whitey what evidence was before the court and asked him if he had anything to say or any evidence to introduce before the court should judge him — if he had, to deliver it quick, as justice had already been kept waiting in the hallway for several hours.

Whitey had grown pale as the extent of the evidence against him was divulged, but he continued sulky and he said that he had "no expectation of justice," but that he was not guilty.

This touched Mr. Beauclerc's anger. "Young man," said he, "Washtucna is a community of honour wherein justice and refinement have a permanent home. These proceedings are informal but square. We hope the accused won't persist in abuse of this body, as it might prejudice said body against him. We want him to have a fair chance."

"Gentlemen," said Judge Rusher coldly, "I have a point in addition to bring forth. It appears that this here accused just dotes on good horse flesh.

Last summer he was seen up on Seven Devils by reliable witnesses riding a mare of which I noted the description, including brand, and on investigation I believe this was Dan'l Burnham's animal which was stolen last summer. I have the description here, written down."

Mr. Daniel Burnham, who was standing by the stove, perked up, "Bay with anchor 'T' left stifle?" he asked before he saw the paper.

"Yes, that's it."

"Sure, that's her," said Daniel, relapsing into a sphynx-like expression of face and pulling his little moustache. "I knowed the damn snake had her and I knowed he'd be got yet."

"You damn ole —" started Whitey, but Mr. Pete Barker squeezed Whitey's wind pipe with his iron fingers and Whitey volunteered no further remarks; indeed, he was kept busy just breathing.

"The court will vote," announced Mr. Woods decisively. "Who all thinks Whitey McGrath did these offences against society?"

There was a long silence.

"Me!" and "Me!" and "Me!" said gruff voices in solemn echo around the shining table. It was unanimous.

"I move that said McGrath be hanged by the neck until dead," said Judge Rusher firmly.

"Ay, ay," roared the men at the table with a sudden anger leaping into their voices that drove every trace of colour down from Whitey's furtive yet savage face.

That was all that I saw. Bob Dalton corralled us in his arms and pushed us out. Then he walked

over to Mrs. Clarke's with Cam and me. She was waiting up and she was commencing to be concerned about Cam, so she hugged us both and asked Bob to come in.

"What detained you?" she asked gently of Cam.

Mr. Bob Dalton told her in his own language. She looked at him, as he talked, with a great horror written on her mobile face.

"I am so glad, Mr. Dalton," she said softly, when he had finished. "You know I count you one of my best friends. I am so glad."

And then Mr. John Bradford came in and I saw the colour come to Mrs. Clarke's thin cheeks and the light to her eyes.

"You did not go —?"

"No — no-o; I don't believe exactly in that sort of thing. I know he's guilty, but I don't believe in 'Judge Lynch.'"

I stayed with Cam that night, for I would have been afraid to go ten feet alone, and John Bradford slept on the sofa downstairs, for Sarah Clarke was afraid. The last thing when we looked out, we saw men straggling back to Washtucna down the Colfax road. They and their shadows looked as black and frightful as witches and goblins in the bright moonlight. Oh, it was terrible.

All night long we woke up in fits and starts, fancying that we were pursued by Whitey McGraths. Once I dreamed they were hanging Bob Dalton and that Whitey McGrath was helping, and that as they went about the grim business they were, in the perfection of irony, busy in singing hymns. I awoke with a shriek. Once later Cam awoke and sprang out of

bed. Sarah Clarke, blessed be she forever! came in often to put us back on our pillows. But, oh, it was a long and terrible night and I remember it yet with horror.

All next day the body of Whitey McGrath hung from a bridge near to where Sam Stimson was killed and no one cared enough for him to cut him down. Finally it was Punts and Bob Dalton who did the thing.

"It might have been me, Doc," said Bob somberly as he proposed it.

"Or any of us," added the doctor. "Besides, it's the humane and civilized thing to do, Bob; are we Apaches?" Having decided that we were not, they buried him under the railroad bridge, almost in a stream of water.

At the very end he had confessed to both the theft and the murder and had died, as most evil men contrive to do, with a prayer on his twisted lips. This was a great comfort to Mr. Beauclerc.

Mrs. Clarke was a good deal shaken by it all, and Bradford and Punts and Jones had much to do to cheer her up. But it was Bradford who was most help to her: he was of her own brand of people; he knew how she felt about things.

CHAPTER XXI

IT was about the time of the demise of the unfortunate Whitey McGrath that fat Doctor Leffingwell adopted Washtucna for his home. Now Doctor Punts had experienced no difficulty in keeping dressed the gunshot wounds of Washtucna's inhabitants nor in prescribing for the few people who were accommodating enough to suffer from other ailments, but Leffingwell evidently thought he could make a living, so he moved in. This was bitterly resented by Cam and Sandy and me as a slur on our particular friend, Doctor Punts. Unable otherwise to express our resentment, we decided to resuscitate the machinery of the tick-tack, which had lain dormant since our unfortunate experiment on the Chinese laundry. These noises, we believed, would irritate the fat doctor and if persevered in for several nights — many if necessary — they might, indeed, persuade him to move on to Colfax, or to some other place which really needed a physician. We talked the thing over and over and this was our mature opinion.

Our first night's experiments were very entertaining and satisfactory. Escaping privily from the charge of our respective parents by back windows and other such devices, we assembled down under the new warehouse about eleven of the clock. It was a pitch black, cloudy, rather warm March night. Washtucna, except Jan Havland's, had long been

asleep, so we went immediately to work. Our music on rosin and string was instantly productive of results. A light flared up in Leffingwell's back bedroom and we heard little Mamie Leffingwell's voice cry out in terrified tones, then a man's voice bellowed, and we jerked loose the hook and ran. It had all been very nice except that we had not particularly liked hearing little Mamie's frightened voice. It had not seemed fair — yet it was a public duty, we could not possibly shrink from it. It was our duty to Punts. " Who'll do him right now! "

Our plans for the next night were to reproduce as nearly as possible the first performance. The events, however, were complicated by unforeseen circumstances. It is seldom possible to reproduce things.

It happened on this night that Mr. Bob Dalton had sufficiently recovered from the sobering effect of his passage with " Judge Lynch " to desire to enjoy a fling. " I am a child of the sun! " cried he, hilariously, " an' of a joyful nacher; " and thereupon he searched out the company of his friend, Mr. Scoop Bender, who was just then idly waiting at the Tennessee Restaurant and Hotel for a party from St. Paul who wished to be guided down into the Rock Lake country to shoot geese. These two restless spirits cast themselves fervently into drinking Jan Havland's whisky. Continuing this occupation through the afternoon and evening, they became hilarious and so boisterous that had Mr. Trillums, the marshal, been in town, he would either have sent them home, put them in the calaboose, or shot them. But Mr. Trillums was in Colfax and he had left no

deputy, although he had deposited the "*skookum* house" key in the hands of Gunnysack Charlie for safe keeping. Left to their own devices Bob and Scoop were simply and utterly blissful by about ten that night.

Their pleasing condition was entirely unknown to Cam and Sandy and me, for on that sunny March Saturday we had made a day's excursion to Pine Creek and then had gone promptly home to supper and after that to bed, so we had had no opportunity to learn what was going forward in town.

But at ten we slipped out again and hooked up our noise gear to the Leffingwell mansion. The first touch on it brought surprising and exciting results. This is the way that it appeared to us: that seventeen lights immediately showed in seventeen windows and then a fat man seven feet tall, garbed in a short night shirt and rubber boots, came out and ran after us with the speed of the wind.

I remember to have felt some resentment against events for the direction they were taking. This man was chasing us just as Chinamen did. It was unworthy of the dignity of the white race. He should have hired a "nigger" to chase us. Why did he do it? Why was he allowed to do it? In spite of this resentment, I, however, adjourned toward the main street on the dead run. At this moment I believe I felt that we were getting more fruits for our efforts than I could conveniently harvest.

I had no plan. I just followed Cam. He had a plan. He said it was his belief that no man would dare to appear on Washtucna's main streets in a night shirt and rubber boots. But Leffingwell apparently

liked it. Cam was mistaken. The big heathen, leathern-feeling devil would have gone to church in a bathing suit if he were allowed. It is people like him that make police necessary. His actions do not reflect on Cam's judgment, he was exceptional.

Our succor came from an unexpected source, so unexpected a source that you might call it providential, provided you bear in mind that providence uses tools of her own choosing. Possibly, however, Leffingwell would not call our deliverance providential at all; there is the other side of the board again.

And, no, I also say it was not providential. The fact should be stated like this. "It is against the laws of nature to chase boys on Washtucna streets." That is more logical. Providence does not enter. It is *law,* for it works all the time (providence just works a few minutes a day) and as it works all the time we grow to have instinctive feelings about it, "hunches" as it were. This is proved by the fact that to this day, when a man is bothered by boys in Washtucna, I advise him to remain silent and endure it. That is my "hunch." After a while the boys will grow up and the next generation of boys will find a new target. I am glad to have this chance to clear up this point; I may save grown up Washtucnans from future trouble.

We were rapidly distancing Doctor Leffingwell as we passed Jan Havland's, for the man was as fat as a prize pig, and speed dwells not in fat men. Indeed, we had gained such a start that as we passed we had enough leisure to notice two men tightening their saddle girths at the hitching rack, the process being aided by mild profanity.

These were Bob Dalton and Scoop Bender. They called to us, "Where you goin'? Is the devil comin'?" We dodged behind William Hoefner's and peeped around, not bothering to answer. In fact, we felt as busy as a railroad president.

"Look a-comin'!" bawled Scoop, rising and yelling like people the night of election. "Bob, just look at him!"

These ejaculations were drawn forth by the appearance under a lantern of Leffingwell, who was lumbering along like a dray, and breathing like a horse with the heaves. "What is it?" He might well ask. It looked like anything you please. But Leffingwell did not pause; he was determined to capture some small boys.

Bob omitted to answer the question. "I'll rope it some and mebbe we can find out what's the matter," he volunteered, swinging into the saddle. Monté, the frozen eared cayuse, gave one buck, landing stiff legged from long habit, and then stood on his toes, while Bob, with one swift motion, jerked loose his rope and then, with two deft whirls and an insidious flirt of the fingers, settled the plaited rawhide over Doctor Leffingwell's bullet head. Bob took a turn around the saddle pommel and the frozen eared pony drew taut, as a good cow pony should. This occurred about as the rope reached Doctor Leffingwell's stomach line. It seems to have been a somewhat painful moment to Leffingwell, for he bellowed like a bay steer.

"This here human male gent, which is what I makes it out to be by the dim stars, is a lot ungentle,"

said Scoop querulously, shooting his revolver at a point about three inches ahead of Doctor Leffingwell's left rubber boot. "Fact is, he probably ain't ever been roped previous to this. He's forchunate not to hev struck rough people, they'd a-hurted him some."

"Sure he is," Bob agreed heartily, "an' I'm takin' him for a little *pasear* up an' down to tame him," and he slapped his spurs into frozen eared Monté, who jumped and jerked Leffingwell severely, and then, under Bob's skilful hand, jerked him about a hundred additional times until he was entirely exhausted. Of course, Leffingwell bawled every step. These exercises covered considerable ground, the whole street, indeed.

Despite the lateness of the hour, a little group of spectators soon gathered, and Cam and Sandy and I came out amongst them. Bob stopped and Monté and Leffingwell took breath. It was so quiet that I heard Leffingwell's teeth rattle, although he was bathed in perspiration.

"This party here'll get a chill if he ain't kep movin'," complained Bob, "standin' aroun' ungarbed 's you might say. It ain't suitable to the climate. I don't want him to get lung fever."

"Doctor Leffingwell," inquired Scoop plaintively, "hev you ever done any shootin'?"

Leffingwell managed to indicate, even in complete absence of breath, that he had not and that he would prefer never to do any.

"Then I'll tell you," said Scoop, kindly, "I'm lendin' you my revolver an' you all can practise on

some o' Jan Havland's winder lights. They's too many of 'em anyway; I've always noticed that. Ain't you, Bob?"

"But — I — I —"

"Oh, no trouble, it's a pleasure," insisted Scoop heartily, "an' the ammunition don't cost much. Sure — here she is. It's a pleasure. Why, anybody can shoot. Bob's teachin' his pig, and surely you ain't goin' to be outdid by a pig."

Doctor Leffingwell felt it impossible to decline this urgent invitation and he obediently commenced blinking out Jan Havland's windows. There were those who afterwards suggested that he might have blinked out Bob or Scoop, but Leffingwell did not think of that. The windows were a large target and he made hits, but he scattered so much that the spectators withered away.

Those shots stirred up some additional life. The barkeeper yelled like a Comanche and ran out the front door, although, in my simple judgment, the back door would have been safer. Also Long Doake Burns arose, dressed hastily and came down the street to investigate, with a shotgun in the corner of his arm. He was a new-comer from Ukiah, California, and before that from the swamps of Arkansas. He had bought a lot of real estate in Washtucna.

"Well, naow," he drawled sorrowfully, "I just don't like this at all. Fact, I'm sick of it. Just cause the marshal goes away for a vacation this here new doctor comes prancin' around, dressed indecent an' howlin' and shootin' things up; an' I made up my mind I won't stan' it. No, sir! A while ago I

hears him hollerin' and bellerin' and now I hears him shootin'. It's like Washtucna wa'n't a law abidin' an' quiet place, which it is knowed to be. I says to myself, 'Doake, I won't stan' it,' and that's right, too. I won't. Why, he'll run the price of real estate cler into the bulb of the thermometer."

Doctor Leffingwell looked uncomfortable, but he could not enunciate, partly on account of fright and partly on account of exhaustion and chill.

"He ought to be throwed in jail a spell," said Scoop solemnly. "He shore has been actin' up. I don't like it myself."

"The way he scairt Monté!" complained Bob sadly. "And that horse has as delicate nerves as a woman. It plum riles me."

"That's right," said a number of indignant voices. "That's right, he ought to be locked up and he would be if Trillums was here."

"Thin in he goes," announced Mr. Gunnysack Charlie, who had recently arrived. "It was not f'r nothin' that Mr. Trillums left me the key to the calaboose; no, sor! 'Twas for just such min as this; yes, sor! Give me your gun, sor! 'Tis a disgrace to the municipality the ga-arments ye wear. Now march, ye divil! on to jail! Un ye with a woife and childers! Fwhat do ye mean by ut? — on with ye!"

Doctor Leffingwell marched and Gunnysack and Scoop and Bob and the little crowd of spectators followed, we youngsters missing nothing. The whole thing was turning out very well; perhaps Leffingwell would now leave the field to Punts.

They shoved Leffingwell roughly into the one room calaboose, which was built solidly of pine two-by-

fours, and the rusty hinges squeaked mournfully behind him. I felt pretty mean. Still, it was a good thing for Punts, I thought.

"Gents," said Leffingwell pleadingly, "for God's sake, gents, ge'me some clo'es or I'll freeze." This was evidently true, for his teeth were chattering as he spoke. This touched Mr. Dalton. He spoke in a voice shot through with emotion. "I know he ain't nothin' but a rough crim'nal, but I'm a soft hearted pusson, I am, and I can't bear sufferin'. I'm goin' to get him some clo'es. It ain't any use to stop me; I'm allus doin' kind deeds like this," and he actually sobbed.

Thereupon he walked his horse off softly and somberly into the darkness in the direction of Doctor Leffingwell's home. I believe he really secured blankets from Mrs. Leffingwell, a mild, bullied woman, using a reasonable amount of prevarication for this purpose and omitting to mention that the doctor was in jail. He said that the doctor had found a sick man who was so horribly sick that he could not leave him for a moment. He said further that the doctor wanted his trousers, his overcoat and two blankets so he could stick close to the job. She said that was like him, which in my experience it was not; it was more like Punts.

Cam and I did not see the blankets arrive. We went home too soon, being dead with sleep. I crawled into Cam's little back window with him and in two minutes we were both asleep side by side, so sound asleep that we heard not one of the considerable noises which must have later been abroad that night. Thus soundly may the virtuous ever sleep!

Sarah Clarke, in the morning, looked at me rather severely, as I had not been there when she went to bed. In about three minutes she knew everything we knew, which shows her art. "The jail burned last night," she said calmly, when we had finished, "and I suppose Doctor Leffingwell is burned with it. Whose fault do you think it is? Do you feel exactly right about it? That happened after you boys came home."

We could not think how we felt and she let us sneak out to investigate.

This was the first time we had been responsible for a murder and we felt guilty and curious.

Leffingwell, however, was not dead and not injured, but he was the most famous man in town. After he had settled down in jail and had become calm, he decided that he was unjustly imprisoned and, further, that in spite of the overcoat Bob Dalton had brought him, he was cold; so, with matches from his overcoat, and dry chips from a corner of the jail, he started a fire which at once warmed him and gradually burned away the wooden walls between himself and freedom. When the hole was big enough he walked forth unscathed and went home to bed. A short time later the whole jail was discovered to be in flames and Washtucna alarmed itself with revolver shots and tried to extinguish the fire. But it was too late. The jail burned to the ground.

That morning Leffingwell was the most cheerful, most confident and best advertised man in Washtucna. He explained at least fifty times to various people just how he escaped and why; and as he talked he puffed a cigar in such a large, indifferent way that

one could not possibly doubt that such adventures were commonplace with him. Even Mr. Pete Barker admitted that Doctor Leffingwell was a "smooth coon." Besides, it was enterprising of him to shoot up the town in his night shirt. Washtucna could but admire the whole transaction.

Further, Doctor Leffingwell insisted on taking on himself all the *blame* of shooting up the town. He would lay nothing on Scoop and Bob. He admitted that he was frolicsome by nature and insisted on paying for new panes of glass for Jan Havland. He admitted that his friends, Scoop Bender and Bob Dalton, had to some extent incited him to this deed, still the blame was his own; he had actually fired the shots. He would not, he said, and could not evade the responsibility.

As for the burned jail — he would see. He had been illegally arrested, the man who locked him up was no marshal at all; still, he was no quibbler, he would do what was right; he was but a struggling follower of Æsculapius, but he would do the right thing.

The Sun and *The Breeze* were both very much impressed by Doctor Leffingwell's manly way of shouldering responsibility and they outbid each other in praising him.

Cam and I, it will be readily understood, were not too anxious to divulge our part in the transaction, although we were disgusted with results. And as Scoop and Bob had gone home to Bob's ranch to sleep off their shame and their liquor and to labour at the education of the trained pig, the word that went the round was this: Doc Leffingwell had, the evening before, been feeling both bored and belliger-

ent, so he had privately "liquored up," then he had casually strolled down town in his night shirt and rubber boots and had shot up the town until he was arrested by a group of fearless and public-spirited citizens, numbering amongst them Long Doake, Gunnysack Charlie, Scoop and Bob. Afterwards Doctor Leffingwell felt the disgrace of being arrested by other people than the marshal, so he had burned his way out in the same liberal spirit of defiance and badinage as that in which he had shot out Jan Havland's window lights. Washtucna was rather proud of such reckless valour. She took off her hat to Doc Leffingwell. He was a true Washtucnan by nature; God had made him a Washtucnan.

This story went very well for several days, but finally Scoop and Bob came to town. Of course, they shyly related their adventures with Leffingwell, or as much of them as they could remember, and Washtucna roared both with laughter at itself and at Doctor Leffingwell. They could no longer admire his valour so unreservedly, but they could still delight in his gall. And, after all, gall was quite as characteristic a trait of Washtucna as valour. It must be confessed that on this occasion the loudest laughter in town was Leffingwell's own. "Three nights in your jail, gentlemen," said he to Scoop and Bob, who had come around to "square things," "would make me the most famous medico in the territory. I could get a fash'nable practice in Spokane, all the tony fast women and gamblers. I'm greatly obliged to you, I'm sure," and he shook hands with vigour.

Leffingwell continued to be a great success in

Washtucna. Within a few weeks he formed a vague professional partnership with A. J. Punts, M.D. They both afterwards occupied the same offices and Leffingwell became one of the institutions of Washtucna. "The followers of Æsculapius," said Punts in explanation, "must hereafter pull together like a team o' mules, draggin' the wagon o' public health out of the mud of ignorance. Leffingwell and I stand for the extermination of the death rate and for the prosperity of Washington Territory. We ain't any more rivulous than two poets or two stars."

After this the next social event of importance in Washtucna was the show given for the benefit of the Widows' Endowment Fund by Bob Dalton's trained pig. This was so highly instructive a show that Messrs. Bradford, Punts and Jones and perhaps others insisted upon paying twenty admissions each on account of instruction received. Mrs. Clarke was too sick to attend, but at hearing the veracious account of it given by Cam and me she cried some more. Punts informed us that this would be a great tonic for her, the credit for which tonic we took entirely to ourselves. I have since doubted if this is what Punts meant.

CHAPTER XXII

I SUPPOSE Sarah Clarke's health had gone down slowly day by day from the time she arrived in Washtucna. I can see now that she had grown thinner and less elastic, but I was then too stupid and inexperienced to see it and even Cam did not know. She herself must have known it, but she said nothing; although I am sure she fought it, for there was great spirit in the little woman.

The first time I remember to have particularly noticed her health and to have been startled by it was on one night that winter when Cam and I came back from a long day of skiing and rabbit hunting with the old Norwegian, John Shoultersack. Shoultersack was a comparative new-comer from nowhere, but, like every one in Washtucna, he had gladly embraced the religion of admiring Sarah Clarke. When we arrived at the Clarkes' that night Shoultersack came into the house to speak a word of cheer, for, like a true Washtucnan, he not only admired Sarah Clarke, but he felt loquacious and neighbourly towards her. She was sitting in the little bent-wood rocking chair and when we came in she tried to rise but could not complete the ceremony. Instead, she dropped into her chair, lay back, and closed her eyes. She looked so white and still, lying there, that I thought she was dead, and my heart went in my throat. Sister Mary

did such things, but she was used to it. I wondered if Sarah Clarke could stand it.

Shoultersack was useful at anything, in his rough way. He sputtered indignation, rubbed water on her face and then picked up her frail body in his long, hairy arms and carried her and put her on her bed as though she had been an infant. She must have been very thin and very light. She opened her eyes presently and said she felt splendid again and would get up, but Shoultersack looked at her with a severe and kindly eye, and, having pulled his long yellow moustache thoughtfully several times, he told her firmly that she must not get up. She said she must make supper. Shoultersack replied that he would do that; that, if it came to business, he was a far better cook than ever she thought of being, and had had much more experience, which latter was true. Then he bustled around like an enormous male hen and the supper he made was good. Sarah Clarke came out and sat with us as we ate and it was then that I noticed how drawn and thin her face was. But she was not through, she had a vast will to live. After a while John Bradford came in and as he entered her eye caught fire. I did not understand why and now I wonder that I saw it at all. She was not through: indeed, she had fallen in love with life.

John Bradford was a good deal concerned and presently he sent me for Punts. That gentleman came away from his poker game at once and he and Sarah talked for a long time in the front room. And always after that he used to come more frequently than ever to see her, now professionally. And Shoultersack came often to make meals, urged, I

fancy, and perhaps even rewarded, by John Bradford and Skookum Jones.

Shoultersack, like Tom Warren, had sailed the seven seas, and then he had come up to a cattle and wheat country to spend the fag end of his life. He was a huge, broad chested, gnarled old man, always in good health, except that periodically and as faithfully as the tax collector or the gas man, a set of chills and fever presented their bill for the privilege he had once enjoyed of living for a time in a native town somewhere on the great Orinoco River. But I have already introduced you to him when he was in the grasp of his chills.

In his well moments Shoultersack seemed to take a perverse pride in this periodic visitation. But in the actual times of his sickness he used all that winter to lie in his bunk in his little board shack hurling forth volumes of indecent blasphemy and consuming port wine, whisky and quinine without end. Recovered, he became again, for exactly the allotted number of days, healthy, mild, gentle and even tolerantly pious. His piety took the form of spiritualism — but Shoultersack was a book in himself.

All through the spring Sarah Clarke grew weaker and finally in early May a trained woman nurse was brought down from Spokane to care for her, by whom I never exactly knew, but I presume it was by Bradford, Punts, Jones, *et al.* Yet she was not solely under their pay. A committee of Washtucnans insisted on distributing that expense amongst something like a thousand people. The names of this committee never were divulged to me, but I could name them. There would be Judge Rusher, Mr.

Beauclerc, Mr. Donnelly and William Hoefner, the smith,— or else his wife. It should be remarked that this female nurse was hired over the protests of Mr. Shoultersack, who considered himself a perfect nurse.

In the first days of May, Sarah Clarke had seemed better, but on May twelfth, when Cam and I returned from Rock Lake, whither we had been taken on a jaunt by Mr. Skookum Jones, who was getting old enough to appreciate company, she was in bed and not able to get up for supper. We told our adventures by her bedside; and how the wild geese came in great honking bands at daylight and how the muskrat built his house.

She listened until Punts and Bradford came and then we, dead with sleep, made off for bed. Punts and Bradford sat by the bed on the old worn Saratoga trunk for a long time, not talking, for Sarah Clarke, I suppose, seemed too weak for that, but just watching. The nurse sat in the corner and knitted. And on many nights thereafter they thus sat with her in the dim lighted little bed-room; Bradford calm, hard as iron; Punts twisting his long, black beard, leering and rolling his eyes, seeking if he might not help her in this great extremity; the nurse knitting, knitting like a machine. Sometimes Mrs. Clarke's hand would lie in Bradford's, for a great sympathy without the words that go with such things seemed to have grown up between them. Punts would grin sardonically. "That is the medicine," he would grate out joyfully to Bradford, on leaving. And then they would meet little old shrivelled Skookum Jones, who, for perhaps two hours, had

been pacing the street. The temporary elation produced by his elopement had ceased, he was looking seedy.

Eventually the subtle elixir of her regard for Bradford proved not sufficient tonic for Mrs. Clarke. We commenced to hear talk of an operation, which, at that time, was a new word and a new idea to me; and even Cam was not used to it. We inquired about operations and from what we could understand they were outlandish and cruel and unbearable things. We talked it over very judicially and then went to Punts and protested. We explained that even cutting your finger hurts a good deal, which we supposed he did not know. Punts listened to us with surprising patience.

"I don't like it either," he said, "but mebbe we got to do it. I don't like it any more'n you do; but mebbe Sarah Clarke needs it."

During those painful days when talk of operations was in the air, Washtucna was very acutely conscious of what events were going forward in Mrs. Clarke's little cottage. She knew that in these mild and lovely days of May, Death was mixing a brew. Would Mrs. Clarke drink of it? That was the question. "She will not," affirmed Mr. Pete Barker confidently. "She's too strong willed a woman, though gentle; yes, sir! She'll not do it!" and he pounded his fist on Jan Havland's mahogany bar. But Washtucna still was afraid. In this matter she lacked her usual optimism.

A Sabbath hush everywhere prevailed in the town except at Jan Havland's, and even there the poker chips seemed to chink more dully than was their

wont, and men spoke in subdued tones and seemed always to be waiting to hear something — waiting awake even far into the night when their rough but suppressed voices could be heard in Doc Punts' office, engaged in the fragmentary conversation with which they passed the time until Punts should return from his vigil and give them the last news of the night. Steady members of these parties were Gunnysack Charlie, Mr. Bob Dalton, Skookum Jones, Mr. Pete Barker; while from time to time others came in, went out and came anxiously in again. And, needless to say, *The Sun* and *The Breeze* outraced each other in compositions touching Mrs. Clarke's condition.

"Gents," said Punts, on one of these occasions, when asked to hazard an opinion in the case, "gents, I'd like to tell you what was going to happen to Sarah Clarke, but I can't do it. The fact is, I ain't entirely runnin' this spell of sickness. The lady is far and out from us fellers here with her vital forces strung out like skirmishers and me tryin' to get reinforcements to the firin' line; and, gents, I don't know if I'm able or not. But the lady is hangin' on, she ain't capitulatin'; she's holdin' the fort and will to the end."

"Which you mean you ain't exactly able to locate the storm centre yet," said Tom Warren, striking his boot gloomily with his quirt. "You ain't sure what wind you'll be sailin' on. I see."

Punts leered horribly, but did not answer. It would have been too fiendish a leer had not a tiny tear drop trickled down one of his hollow cheeks. Punts, at this, was embarrassed and shaken, and he

strode out into the corridor, his long beard tightly bunched up in a bony hand and pulled to one side.

" Which it's enough to start any feller's emotions to grindin'," said the squeaky, unsteady voice of old Skookum Jones, as he nervously rubbed his veined, knotted hands on the soft nap of his plug hat.

" She's in God's hands," boomed Mr. Beauclerc's solemn voice; which, indeed, was Washtucna's view of the situation, including Punts and Tom Warren and Skookum Jones.

CHAPTER XXIII

WASHTUCNA, like Cromwell, trusted in God, kept its powder dry and then worried. Two days passed without the least change in Sarah Clarke's condition. Early in the forenoon Punts entered his office where was the usual crowd of men waiting the last word of the patient. A crowd of this sort had, these last days, so closely clung about Punts' office that their sessions were almost continuous, and other activities in Washtucna seemed dead, to have halted short, as it were, right in the heart of springtime. There was no joy whatever in Washtucna's heart, no new enterprises were born and old ones fainted in their tracks. It was the exact variety of tribulation most difficult for Washtucna to stand, the variety in which one can not act, can not do anything. Punts strode up and down his unswept office floor and twisted his beard and leered at the crowd and then he looked steadfastly at the ceiling.

"How'd she seem, Doc?" somebody asked impatiently.

Punts seemed not to hear. "Gents, it's like this," he said softly, "it's like this; I may as well tell you: I'm out of my depth. Let's get down to facts: I'm out of my depth, plum out. I ain't a professor of all knowledge, I admit. I know about gunshot wounds and child birth, but this has me down and is sitting on me, and Leffingwell is the same way, but he don't

admit it like I do. Now we are on bed rock. What I want is a consultation with a specialist on people's insides. I'd have called one long ago but there ain't anybody to consult. The Spokane sharps are like me, some ignorant, some of 'em more so, though, like Leffingwell, they deny it. We can't wait for St. Paul and, anyway, St. Paul's just a village. We hev to go to Chicago or mebbe New York."

"Why goodness!" burst in old Joe Naff, who came from the Rock Lake country and was almost a stranger in Washtucna, but who had, nevertheless, at once adopted a hearty interest in Sarah Clarke's illness. "Why, goodness me! Why, goodness me! I'm damned if it don't look providential; but there's a sharp campin' down on my ranch which is a New Yorker by birth and residence and just the breed of expert specialist you want as far as I can make out. He was telling me he cut open King George of Greece onct; he's just your man. He's got this nervous prostrition from over-work and now he's restin' down near my place. Nice feller, too, but has to live in a tent and don't eat like a cow puncher: which cow punchers wouldn't, either, if they had brains."

Punts showed glimmerings of interest but he was sceptical as became the only scientific man present.

"You don't recall his name, do you?"

"Why, sure I do. His name is Smith Mudd, Doctor Smith Mudd, an' he's a little cold-blooded feller, not any bigger'n Skookum Jones here, though he dresses plain, not like Skookum 'tall."

"Not Smith Mudd of New York!" cried Punts excitedly, "that couldn't be! Why, he's the most eminent insides expert in America, he's — why,

gents, we *got* to get that man if he's only down in Rock Lake.

"Why, just his skin stuffed with straw would help more'n Leffingwell and me combined and multiplied by four — not that I renig, however, on gunshot wounds."

"He says he ain't workin' a bit, that he'll be damned if he looks at a soul this trip," interrupted Naff doubtfully. "Why, I wanted him to look at my new Durham bull, for doctorin' is all alike, and he wouldn't at all, and it's the only Durham bull on Rock Lake. He ain't got much public speerit."

Mr. Pete Barker spoke up softly. "Mebbe," he said in a very low voice, "this all doctor sport would require a little persuadin', mebbe he would. But that can be applied. Two of us ought to be able to give him a strong invite as he's small and sick — say Bob Dalton and me. Of course he'll come all right if we ask him. Don't you think so, Bob? We'd like to have the privilege of invitin' him anyway, wouldn't we, Bob?"

Bob thought so very emphatically and he felt so confident of success that he offered to make a large wager and give any odds people liked that the doctor would accept what was still referred to as the "invitation" to consult with Punts in the case of Sarah Clarke.

"Le's see," said Pete thoughtfully, pulling out the very handsomest watch in Washington Territory. "If we all was to start at once we'd be back before dark if not delayed, which we'll take pains to prevent. Right near your house, eh, Mr. Naff? Camped out sort of, eh?"

"Two hundred yards south, two wall tents and a Chinese to cook. Don't move around much, just loafs."

"Is she O.K., gents?" asked Mr. Pete Barker, looking around. "Are we desired to take this job?"

Everybody agreed that it was exactly O.K. and shortly afterwards a pounding of hoofs was heard over Steptoe Avenue. Mr. Pete Barker and Mr. Bob Dalton were off; Bob's old high headed, frozen eared mustang, Monté, showing the way, a thing which he had done in his time to many a piece of horse-flesh. Out they went up the steep Robert's Hill, spring sparkling all about them.

It was a fast and long ride, but about sunset it terminated when three dusty men galloped into town, frozen eared Monté in a lather but at least a neck in the lead still, showing the way with his long and ugly head.

The third man was Doctor Smith Mudd of New York. He was a bright eyed, alert, business-like little man, as active as a grasshopper and as decided as a squirrel trap. As Mr. Naff had said, he was perfectly cold-blooded but he was also a master workman, a very master of all the skill of his trade. And when he took a job he took it. He had not intended originally to come; indeed, he openly and abruptly and without reservation refused. But he was open to argument, as intelligent minds always are; and to the argumentative power of a Colt's revolver pointed at the pit of his stomach he succumbed completely.

"You hold the cards," he remarked dryly, gather-

ing a few things into a leather bag; and having capitulated he stayed capitulated. "I prefer to go voluntarily rather than to go lashed to my saddle," he added, and then quietly, "the ride may do me good." He was a practical man.

Dr. Mudd, as he arrived in Washtucna, was covered with dust and perspiration, nevertheless he looked every inch a New Yorker, calm, superior and scornful. He had been comparatively unused to riding and his legs were so cramped that he hobbled when he walked. But he neither said nor implied any word of complaint; he was a business-like little man of invincible spirit and a sport. It was easy to see how such a man became eminent. Washtucna understood at a glance.

Dr. Mudd dismounted in a silent crowd before Dr. Punts' office. He shook hands warmly with Punts and looked the crowd over with sharp, fearless little human eyes as though they were cattle, whereupon many of them felt like cattle. Then he and Punts entered the office.

"Doctor Punts and I would like some private conversation," he said sharply to some of the overflow which had backed up into the office. Washtucna vacated and said over its shoulders that it would give him privacy or anything else if he fixed up Sarah Cameron Clarke. Moreover, they decided after they went out that in spite of his scorn and his assumption of authority they liked his appearance. Then they humanly decided that they even liked him because of his arrogant assumption of authority. Washtucnans thereby showed kinship to the rest of humanity. People prefer to be bossed by the doc-

tor. You want him to act like the Lord Almighty. It relieves you of a lot of responsibility. Washtucna on this occasion sighed relievedly and went out into the street and looked in. They had just the doctor they wanted.

Presently the new German waiter girl from the Tennessee Restaurant brought in some hot soup, which little Dr. Mudd ate while he discussed with Punts the intricacies of the case under consideration.

"Um — m —" we heard him grunt at the end, "we'll go over." Punts strode off with the little man after him, his legs twinkling vaguely in the starlight. And Cam and I followed while Washtucna waited and waited far into the night.

That night, the night of the nineteenth of May, was long and fearful to us all. I recall no night so lovely, so terrible and so vivid except that on which my first child, a son, was born; but that was long years afterwards. All Washtucna in an extravagant spirit of devotion stayed awake that night. Over in Jan Havland's men sat waiting in sullen silence, waiting, waiting, waiting. Sometimes a head drooped and a man dozed; sometimes some one drearily called for liquor; again, some one suddenly lighted a match for pipe or cigar. Outside on the wide steps of *The Breeze* office there sat a group sprinkled with women. They talked in low tones and, like the others, waited and waited. Two people in the town remained aloof from groups: one was John Bradford, who paced the length of Sarah Clarke's little front lawn with the regularity of the pendulum of a clock, another was Miss May Caylor, who walked feverishly around the depot platform

until you would have thought she would fall of dizziness. It was a long watch and Cam and I dodged from place to place.

At about nine Punts came from the little house to his office to secure some additional apparatus. "He'll operate," he said succinctly and solemnly. "Nobody can tell how it'll come yet; it's serious, but — he's a great surgeon, a master surgeon." This remark was directed to little Mr. Skookum Jones, by whom it was repeated and so it went from mouth to mouth.

Then time moved very slowly. Cam and I roamed restlessly about and speculatively watched the dimly lighted windows of Mrs. Clarke's bedroom and I remember that Cam's face was white, as white as his mother's and almost as high nosed and his strange mottled eyes were amazingly like hers. He had at last realised what it all meant.

Before they gave the anesthetic to her, they called Cam and me in. "I'll be all right in the morning, boys," Mrs. Clarke insisted faintly with an attempt at her habitual gaiety of speech. But suddenly she closed her eyes and her face twisted with pain. Punts shoved us out the door but over my shoulder I saw Sarah Clarke's thin white face, high nosed like a princess's, wide browed like Juno.

"She was awful beautiful," I said when we were in the open. Cam only choked. Outside there was a little wind astir. It whined at the corners, sang dolefully at the telegraph wires and made the people on *The Breeze* steps pull their wraps closer. But the stars were noble and so bright that in their dim light we could see the loom of the distant mountains.

Punts had told us peremptorily to go to bed. But of course we did not go and could not have gone, that were beyond our natures. For a long while we sat on the railroad track where we could see the shadows flit back and forth against Sarah Clarke's drawn window shades as Punts and little Smith Mudd moved about inside. And we could also see Bradford as he strode inexorably up and down on the only piece of lawn that then existed for miles and miles. Sometimes Miss May Caylor's white skirt winked on and off on the station platform like a faint, faint light. Sometimes a distinguishable voice rose from the party in Jan Havland's or from that on the steps of *The Breeze* office. Once an extra train from Spokane came roaring through without stopping, shaking the earth and pulling a little gale of wind with it. There by the railroad we continued sitting for hours. Occasionally some one of the various groups went home but many still remained. Then Cam and I commenced to doze off and on and I fell sound asleep. Cam woke me with his elbow.

"Mart," he said, "the shadows are still now; wake up!"

They were, indeed, quite still. The two men were evidently sitting down side by side. Probably the thing was over. They were just having a final look at her: could she speak, we wondered.

"They're sittin' on the Saratogy trunk where Punts sat all last night," said Cam, and I saw he was right. There they were: the shadow of a big framed man, which was Punts, and the shadow of a little one, which was Mudd. We watched again for

a long time. Twice Punts got up, moved about and returned to his seat.

"Punts is a better doctor'n Mudd," said I firmly.

We discussed this.

Bradford still walked up and down. Then I dozed again and as I dozed I shivered, for it was cold. Bradford was like the pendulum of a clock, he could not stop. But Miss May Caylor had stopped and I could see where she sat on a great bale of jute sacks by the white loom of her skirt. Again I dozed and shivered.

"The door's open! Punts is comin' out," whispered Cam shrilly. "Come!"

We ran down to meet him and we clung to his hands as he strode over towards the dimly lighted office. John Bradford was abreast him. Miss May Caylor was at his heels and other people followed close.

When we saw Punts' face under the lamplight we all felt a great peace and quiet. It was drawn and tired and worn but elation shone from his bold eyes. It was a triumphant face, a joyful face.

Everybody waited for him to speak.

"I think she's all right," said Punts. "I think she's all right. She's out of the ether and has rallied. Dr. Mudd thinks she's all right. He's staying there while I sleep an hour or so, then I'll go back. I think she's all right, and if she is, the credit is Dr. Mudd's. He's a great man, a master surgeon."

There was a little dull murmur of elation. May Caylor turned back and walked away and I could hear her throat catch. Mr. Bradford patted Punts

gently on the back and Punts put one hand on Bradford's shoulder and covered his bold eyes with the other.

"McPetherick," said Punts fiercely, "put Cam and Mart to bed some place in your damn rattletrap hotel. Good night, kids!"

Outside, gorgeous day was coming, hurling night back into the black hole beyond the western horizon, but we could hear glasses clinking in Jan Havland's.

"No noise," grated Punts harshly, as he stuck his head in at the door. "No noise, damn ye!" And there was none; but the glasses clinked gently long life to Sarah Clarke and Punts and Doctor Mudd.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE morning following and the mornings which followed thereafter justified the hopeful prognostications of Punts. Mrs. Clarke rallied beautifully, there were no complications and she was in good spirits.

Washtucna's feelings and energies were naturally greatly refreshed by these various hopeful symptoms in Mrs. Clarke. First it celebrated with exuberance. Then it went into its business and pleasure with renewed vigour and strength: the building of ramshackle, tawdry houses was pursued with fresh zeal, town real estate further got itself inflated, and vast acres were put under the yoke of plough and harrow to the benefit of the human stomachs of the world. Then the plan of the water works was approved by the town council and I regret to say that in the general enthusiasm begotten by enthusiasm a great many wild-cat enterprises raised their heads above ground and flourished.

But Washtucna in its new enterprises did not in the least forget Mrs. Clarke. She was their tutelar saint, or, indeed, was almost Washtucna itself. Whether by threats or by offers of reward I do not know, but Washtucna persuaded little Doctor Mudd to visit Judge Rusher for ten days until all possible danger of a relapse for Mrs. Clarke should be

ended. In addition, it bombarded Mrs. Clarke with presents. She received enough not altogether well selected delicacies to feed fifteen or twenty sick people. This seemed wasteful, but Cam and I liked the arrangement, for we ate much of the food, and what we did not eat the brothers and sisters Campin took off our hands.

Cam and I were always together those days. They let us into the sick room together that first day and they drove us out together. Then together we climbed Granite Hill and talked things over on a high windy spot wherefrom you could see the rolling hills for miles, all green now with growing grain. I ate a live grasshopper on a dare, and Cam put an angle worm in his mouth.

Every day thereafter we saw Sarah Clarke for increasing lengths of time, and never since I knew her had she been so light-hearted and hopeful, so full of youth. Indeed, she seemed very young and she grew strong at such an amazing rate that it was not two weeks until she was able to sit up much of the time on her own little front porch and talk to people.

And to that little front porch came many friends, both men and women. But most frequently and to stay longest came John Bradford, alert, strong, sunburned, aggressive, yet kindly and garbed always in the height of English fashion. And, though Cam and I did not understand exactly what was happening, we nevertheless realized in a general way that it was John Bradford's strength as much as her own that was pulling Sarah Clarke up and imparting to her a new capacity for living. It was even giving

her back a piece of youth again. He used to sit with her through long evenings and often in the morning he came with flowers brought down from Spokane, with what seemed to Washtucna people princely prodigality. Sometimes he read aloud, at first mostly from books of adventure and travel, in which he was frankly interested, and of which Cam and I could afford to miss no word. Then he started poems and, after a few trials, we left, which was probably exactly what he was after. Small blame to him; we could have been of no use to a lover. Always thereafter he seemed to us to be reading poems when we arrived, so we did not do much arriving. If he had only read active, belligerent poems we could have stood it, but he was absolutely merciless; he read good poems, poems of Keats and Browning and things called sonnets and odes. Oh, it was too horrible.

All this flower and poem activity came to the end we could have foretold had we been grown up enough to understand. Consequently Washtucna in general was not unprepared; some of it had even predicted the future actions of Mrs. Clarke and Bradford with reasonable certainty and it had its blessing straining at the leash.

Early in July Mrs. Clarke was able to get about to places with considerable freedom, able to walk a little and to take long drives with John Bradford. On one of these drives they took Cam and me and we went out to the elbow bend of Pine Creek, there where James O'Neil Clarke was buried in the valley. Old Tom Warren strode down from his hill residence again through bunch grass, now yellow and

ripe with the summer's fulness. He showed us with pride how he kept a few flowers bright upon the grave of James O'Neil Clarke by an automatic dripper, the pattern for which he had seen many years before in the Spice Islands. And, probably principally to relieve the tension, he became garrulous and told hair-raising stories of his adventures amongst Malay pirates. Then he asked us to stay for supper with him and we all did, every person helping to cook. Afterwards, as we were sitting on the porch, Tom spoke in his roaring voice to Sarah Clarke.

"I hope, ma'm, you ain't remainin' single much longer — it's a sin to God, ma'm; and you need a convoy; yes, sir, a convoy, ma'm; for the world is just a huge piratical sea and tenderness needs protection."

Mrs. Clarke looked at Mr. Warren with a suspicious moisture in her wonderful mottled eyes; he had caught the spirit of the moment. He could be tactful enough for a diplomat when he chose.

"Mr. Warren," she said presently, "I want you to come to my house next Saturday night at eight and we'll tell you something. Something of great importance to us, but I think you have already guessed it."

This was the first I had heard of that later so celebrated party. But next day word was sent out to other people, to everybody in and near Washtucna. And on Saturday night Washtucna hitching racks were full, crowded with hacks and buckboards and saddle ponies. The crowd was so great that in Mrs. Clarke's little house they threw open even the win-

dows to let the overflow look and hear and on the inside there was only standing room.

When people were assembled, there were passed around vast numbers of glasses of punch — a beverage quite new to Washtucna and very justly regarded with suspicion by men accustomed to straight liquor.

It was Doctor Punts who rapped for silence on the little dining-room table with his huge bony knuckles, but it was Mr. Skookum Jones's thin and wavering voice which arose in speech. Mr. Skookum, it must be understood, was very handsomely garbed for this occasion. He had a new Prince Albert purchased less than twenty years before, skin tight broadcloth trousers and high-heeled calf skin boots of Civil War pattern, while his rusty plug hat was carried under his arm and his beard was actually trimmed.

"Ladies and gents of Washtucna," he quavered, plucking the white hairs of his goatee, "I believe she's about a year since Mrs. Clarke came here and it's been a big year for Washtucna and on the whole a happy year for us all. It was a change for Mrs. Clarke coming from the teeming and effete civilization of the East to arrive here, but now, ladies and gents, she contemplates even a greater change — in fact, ladies and gents, she contemplates entering the holy and honourable estate of marriage, which is right and proper. And who with? — nobody but our own neighbour and friend John Bradford. And as there is neither man nor woman here but wishes them good luck, I ask you to join me in drinking THEIR HEALTH!"

Washtucna threw its mistrust of punch overboard

and drank bottoms up, and then they cheered and rushed at Mrs. Clarke and Bradford, who were now observed to be standing side by side next to Punts. There was a temporary riot of congratulation and good wishes.

"Speech, Bradford!" cried a voice and fifty others echoed it. He was shoved up on a chair. "I am much obliged, friends," he said embarrassedly; "I'm much obliged, but you know I'm not much of a speaker; not like Skookum or Doc here, who can speak any time. However, there's one thing I'd like to say, which you all know is true: that I haven't been so very sensible thus far in life, in fact I've been a good deal of a fool. I know I'm not fit for her and so do you; but, men, I'll do better. I'm playing the game on a higher altitude hereafter. I know how you all feel about Mrs. Clarke and if I don't act right, which I will, you can pot me up and I'll never complain. I'm much obliged to you."

"Well sphoken!" cried Mr. Gunnysack Charlie in falsetto when the cheering had died. "I say all roight! When ye say ye are not fit it shows ye are fit, just as pwhat I say shows I'm Irish. Well sphoke, I say—" but a hand choked him. Mr. Gunnysack, I regret to say, was not sober.

The fiddles struck up and the furniture was cleared away. They danced until Punts sent them home with the explanation that Mrs. Clarke was still convalescent and that he was her physician. It was a good dance. To be true, there was a shortage of females and Mr. Bob Dalton and Mr. Scoop Bender became female impersonators by the simple ruse of

tying handkerchiefs on their arms; but it is a good dance that gets remembered as many years as I remember this one, so I repeat that it was a most excellent dance.

Next day Gunnysack Charlie, having become sober, reminded Washtucna that no one except Mrs. Clarke or Bradford yet knew when to expect the wedding. It then transpired that neither did Mrs. Clarke nor Bradford. They had not decided.

CHAPTER XXV

IT is my present opinion that in selecting the proper line of action for a boy whose mother was engaged to be married, Cam and I went astray, just as we had done in selecting a method of ridding the town of Leffingwell. But our error was not due to lack of cogitation and deep thought. We gave our very best brains to that matter for several days, and talked it over for hours up on Granite Hill in a patch of dwarf huckleberries, which had taken up a piece of land too poor for the bunch grass to live in. As we talked, we ate huckleberries and fed them to sucker-mouthed, hungry young sparrows. One nest of five of these featherless, squalling creatures ate one hundred and sixty-seven berries in one day. Cam tried to decide how many we ought to eat at the same rate. We concluded we could not eat that many without exploding and, besides, who would pick them? So we got back again to the subject of what Cam's conduct should be after his mother was married. Cam sat down, tucked his knees under his chin and rocked back and forth as his mother did in her little bentwood chair. He was supposed to be thinking — he was thinking.

"I tell you, Mart," said Cam, after due deliberation, and as he spoke he kept his speckled eyes fixed on the horizon, "I tell you, when a boy has become grown up to be twelve years old like me and his

mother decides to marry up again, it looks to me the boy ought to dig out. Of course a feller of that age is plenty able to take care of himself. If he can ever make a livin' he can do it then. It ain't as though he was only nine or ten. Now don't you think so? Don't you think I am right? I've thought it over and that's the way it looks to me."

"Of course," said I contemplatively, dropping a final huckleberry into the insatiable craw of a young bird. "Of course you're right. A feller ought to be independent; he wouldn't want to ask Bradford for money for chewing-gum and fish hooks and other things he'd need. He'd rather make it hisself. But there's your ma, she'd feel rotten — at least I think she would. Women allus do feel rotten about everything; that's my idea."

"You'd think so," said Cam judicially, "you'd think so now, wouldn't you? But, Mart, I been inquirin' into this business an', besides, you know I been noticin' things all my life — I'm a great noticer anyway — and my experience is they don't hardly seem to know you're gone. You see, Mart, havin' a new husband must be awful occupin' to a woman, there ain't any way of tellin' just how he'll like to have things fixed. I been talkin' to Mr. Gunnysack, never lettin' him guess what I'm up to, and he thinks that too."

"If that's so," I conceded, entirely convinced, "I guess a feller might just as well go; it ain't any use to stay around and be a nuisance if your family ain't goin' to know whether you're there or not. And I guess Gunnysack would know. He told me his ma married several times."

" That's what I think too," said Cam firmly, " and that's the reason I'm goin' so soon — day after tomorrow mornin' early."

This determination of Cam's I now judge to have been entirely new in his mind at that moment, but his voice was as firm as if he had been planning to do the thing for six months at least. I naturally was fooled by it. I believed he had known what he wanted to do for a long time. I was startled.

" What you goin' to do when you get away? " I asked with a quick feeling of prudence or something that resembled it.

" Go railroadin'," he replied grandiloquently, and he lay back in the short brush and looked calmly at the sky and then went on: " I'm goin' to see Mr. Hirschlager, like he told me to do, and get a job from him bein' newsboy on a train, peanut butcher, — and — say, Mart, why don't you —" and he sat up triumphantly, " why don't you go, too? You must be sick of dodgin' your old man all the time. And he don't get better very fast. I wouldn't stand it. I'd run away."

I had been thinking of that myself and I jumped at it. " I'll do it," I said; " I'll do it! " and then we lay on our backs on the dwarf huckleberry bushes and made our plans: what to take and what to leave. And then we planned our life in some detail for the next twenty or forty years. We were enthusiastic. I was a sort of natural run-away boy anyway. My fathers had been running away from times unremembered; going to sea, going here and there. And my brother Tim had already gone. Poverty was the reason; we had been poor always and always, which

takes us back to rack rent. Cam was different, he did not come of a run-away breed; but he did not relent. And yet we both felt sort of rotten and empty when we got to thinking of the details. But, though we felt weak, we talked strong and talked long. It was dark when we got home but we had finished plans for the future. Cam would get promoted to be engineer and I would be his fireman, unless we decided to become town marshals or cattle men.

There was no backsliding. We sneaked out and held another meeting that night and looked at a lot of places we would not have time to see next day and noticed just what they were like so we would know. And we planned a little more, but Cam was rather silent that night. It was so with him later in life. In emergencies he was silent but unshakably firm. "The child is father to the man."

Cam Clarke's days in Washtucna were about lived out; and I see now, as I look back over my blotted pages, that I have not done what I intended to do. I intended to write almost entirely of Cam Clarke; of Cam Clarke, indeed, as he lived in Washtucna and was affected by it, but quite exclusively of him. I have not done this. I have written of many other things: of Washtucna in general and of myself in particular. But it is all right, if I have kept any proportion in the writing. Washtucna was where he lived and I was his chum, and the people I have described were those that lived with and near him. I have wanted the world to see a picture of the boy who later as a man came to be the greatest of financial jugglers, yet a leader of conservative men; who

was mild and gentle and loyal and true, yet was as ruthless as a Tartar chieftain. He has done a great work. While he is yet young he is a great man; yes, a great man, though you may damn him and disapprove him. I wanted the world to see how such a man looked when he was a boy, and if I have told only a little and that true, I am satisfied. He, it is now universally agreed, was and is an extraordinary phenomenon; and I loved him. Yes, he is as extraordinary as our own Caucasian race; as startling and natural as mine own people. He is a true Aryan, yet an ancient Greek more than an American. I wanted to let the world see that he was human, that he had a sweet mother and that he was a good comrade.

On the next day we went in the morning to the swimming pond for a farewell plunge and, though it was muddy and shallow and yellow, I said I liked its looks more than any "swimming hole" I should ever see; and I was right. When I went home to dinner that day every one was kind to me. That was almost too much. I became two boys: one wanted to go, one to stay. I took both boys out in the back yard to talk it over. Why had people to be kind to me on that day of all others? Why need even my father pat me on the head?

The first boy wanted me to go to Spokane. "Mart," he said, "I'm sure glad you're goin' up there, it'll be fine. Mr. Hirschlager'll get you a job and a newsboy's uniform and Cam'll be along, and everybody knows how smart and noble he is; and I guess you'll have the finest time a boy ever had."

"Shuh," said the other boy, "it's mighty nice

right here in Washtucna and everybody treats you fine most always; you know that yourself and mebbe you'll grow up to be a horse-doctor or marshal or something else important here in the Palouse Country."

"Washtucna'll be a sick place without Cam," soliloquized the other voice.

This argument filled my mind with blankness and the run-away boy went on, "And Washtucna'll miss you and Cam if you go, and they'll say you are about the niftiest kids they ever saw, and all the kids will tell how well they knew you, and be proud, too. But if you stay here they won't pay any attention. Why, lively fellers cannot be tied up here in a little town any longer. You heard Doc Punts say that several nights ago when he was talking about leaving. A feller has to move along. I bet he'll go, too, some day."

I listened to the voices no further but I hunted up Cam in a kind of panic. I would keep faith with him, that was all.

"I'm a-goin' all right," I said doggedly. Cam was lying on the grass looking at the sky.

"Sure you are," said he, fixing his battery of mottled gray eyes on me. "We're going at four o'clock to-morrow morning and we ain't telling these Washtucna fellers either. Mebbe they'd tell somebody to stop us and we don't want any trouble with 'em. We just skin right out."

I was surprised. "There ain't any train at four," I suggested remonstratively, for somehow I thought we were going by train, say in a box car.

"Sure there ain't," he said airily, "but we're walk-

ing and it's only forty-six miles to Spokane anyway. We're walking on account of scarcity of money and the inconvenience of travelling like hoboes."

I agreed that he had a good reason. "But how'll we get off without getting noticed? Who's going to eat our breakfast for us? They'll miss us first thing."

Cam had it all fixed. Through his life he always had things fixed. "It's this way, Mart," said he, winking as solemnly as a grown person, "it's this way. To-night at supper we tell our mothers and sisters and such people that we're gettin' up early and goin' to early breakfast at Rusher's so's to get out to Pine Creek for some good fishing. What we really do is to get out to Tom Warren's for breakfast down on Pine Creek; and gee! I bet he has fine breakfasts." I refused this wager.

"How'll we wake up? I sleep awful hard."

"You stay with me and I'll wake up all right," replied Cam.

We talked things over still further and framed our lies up in detail and then we sneaked down for old time's sake to Jimmy Day's flat, where Cam and I had first seen each other. That seemed ages ago, but we could pick out the exact spots where the mare bucked and where I struck on my head. That place was not any comfort to us; it hurt us inside someway. So then we sneaked in through Sarah Clarke's back door and into Cam's room, and while she went driving with John Bradford we packed Cam's baggage. There was a little silver frame with pictures of his mother and father side by side looking, oh, very young, mere children as I see it now; there was

a rattlesnake rattle from Rock Lake; three handkerchiefs, which seemed too many to me; an old valentine from Julie Beauclerc and ninety cents in cash money. Everything else he left, saying he would send for them when he got a good job, which he guessed would not be very long, as Mr. Hirschlager could, as far as was visible to him, give a fellow any job on the railroad that he pleased.

Then Cam sat down at his little bureau and told me to go out while he composed a letter to Julie Beauclerc which was to tell her (strict secret) that we were going away for good. Cam said I must deliver it, as of course it was not customary for young gentlemen to deliver their own letters to their sweethearts, and sometime he would do the same for me. So I went out. I suppose it took him a long time to finish writing that letter, for I fell asleep in the sun. I've always been glad I did that; it was one of the most refreshing sleeps I have ever had and I should hate to have missed it. When I awoke I was game for anything.

Cam woke me by dragging a rope across me. I thought it was a snake and I jumped up and howled like an insane boy and afterwards got angry, which shows that it was a good joke. Cam laughed, then I laughed, for I suddenly remembered that I could play the joke on some one else. That made me realize what a masterly joke it was.

"Gimme the letter you been writin' so much," I said, "an' I'll take it up to Julie right away."

He did, and I thought it was very handsome, as it was sewed right through with yellow string to keep it shut. Cam was an original boy. And it was per-

fumed and it smelled fine. I was envious and wished I could assemble such a letter myself; but it takes genius to do those things. Strangely enough it was pretty clean too, that is, until I took it. I suggested to Cam that he come along most of the way and keep me company.

Cam looked at me wearily. "Sometimes," he said sadly, "I wish I was goin' away alone. You Palouse fellers don't seem to savvy about carryin' letters. Why, Mart, this is a secret an' an adventure. How am I goin' up there with you? I'm stayin' away to deceive my enemies, don't you see? And even *you* can't go *straight* up. You ought to see that. You got to scout around and take advantage of bushes and sneak up back of the barn and mebbe hide in the manger. You got to use *strategy*, Mart, so's to deceive them enemies. The boys in Worcester, Mass., always did that way."

I indicated to him that he did not appreciate me, that I was a pretty good strategist myself and that I was sick of Worcester, "Mass.," and then I went off looking frequently behind fence posts and such places for Cam's enemies. I might defy him with my voice, but I did what he said. There are people like that still. Fortunately I did not see any enemies, so I met no delay on the way. I did not even see any up around the Beauclercs' house. Nevertheless I executed all of Cam's instructions and did stunts of my own in the way of enemy hunting, until I felt tired as if I had spent the day in a gymnasium. Then I sneaked up on my stomach through the grass to the shade of a young poplar tree where Julie was swinging her doll in a hammock and I whispered

hoarsely, "Julie Beauclerc!" This, I was sure, was about the most improved thing in strategy there was.

She made a little scream, but when she saw who it was, she ran at me and slapped me. That was just like her, I should have felt sure it was she if it had been midnight. It hurt me a little, but I did not mind, for she was Julie Beauclerc. However, I pretended I did mind. I sat down very leisurely and said:

"Julie Beauclerc, I am surprised at you; but I s'pose it's just ign'rance. You ain't got any idea what dangers I've run to see you, with Cam's enemies hidin' around every place, and everything." And then I suddenly lay down on my stomach and squirmed and looked around according to my ideas of a scout using strategy.

Of course Julie was sorry right away when she saw what I was doing. She said she had misjudged me and she dodged behind the gooseberries to help hunt enemies herself. But she did not find any either and she came back. "What is it, Mart, that Cam wants?" she whispered very cautiously so the enemies could not hear.

I gave her the letter very secretly and turned around to look for the enemy again. When I looked at her she was crying softly, just as long after I once saw a woman crying for a lost child — and that woman was this child grown up. Her crying made me feel uncomfortable, so I looked for the enemy some more. An enemy is a great comfort at times.

Pretty soon she came over to me. "I think Cam's the noblest boy alive," she said, "and I think you are

next." I modestly acknowledged the compliment by calling her a liar, which was not very gracious. She understood and showed me the letter. I remember every word of it.

"*Dear Julie:*

"We are going away never to come back, tomorrow a.m. Washtucna is all right but there ain't enough railroads for Mart and me. Tie a string to your toe and stick it out the window. I'll pull it at five. You can trust Mart. This is the most secret thing I ever wrote.

"Yours truly,

"CAMERON CLARKE.

"P.S. I am taking your valentine with me and shall cheerish it or die. I read about the string on your toe in a book."

I, too, thought that was a noble letter and I said so, and while Julie went to write an answer I quit looking for the enemy and utilised my strength in stealing a piece of mince pie from the spring house. It was good mince pie and tasted better because I said I had earned it.

When Julie came back I was hiding from Cam's enemies again and it took her a long time to find me. She found me near the watermelon patch asleep in the sun, for the watermelons were green. I told her it was a good thing the melons were green because if they had been ripe I might have become so interested in them that the enemy could have slipped up upon me. She was shocked. She had some foolish idea that stealing watermelons from Mr. Beauclerc would be dishonest, although she easily saw that

it would be all right to steal them from other people. Females are queer. I told her any boy would know better. So she gave me the note to Cam and, as the question of the watermelon was purely academic, I came away without further argument, looking for enemies every step.

It was almost supper time when I got back to the Clarkes' and I was tired and hungry. Sarah Clarke was lying down, while Cam with a lump over his eyebrow was reading a book about another boy who had run away from home. This was to get pointers. He wanted to do it right.

I gave Cam the letter. He read it and showed me the signature, which said, "yours forever, Julie;" and asked me if that was not fine. I said it was, but I giggled and asked him who had pasted the hen egg onto his eyebrow. He said he had hunted up Sandy and had picked a fight with him just for old times' sake and because he was lonesome and homesick on account of being about to leave the place. He had a hard time making Sandy fight, he said, and he had a hard time licking him, and in doing it he bumped his forehead on a stone. I moved away and giggled some more. That riled Cam and our plan for running away was in grave jeopardy. We "jawed" back and forth and I told him he better not pick a fight "off me." But we patched up peace and were better friends than ever and more determined to run away. We both went to our homes to supper on time, to disarm our families' suspicions. I do not believe it was a good method of disarming them. It might just as well have put them on their guard.

That night we walked around town and Doc Punts saw us and bought us all the peanuts we could eat. That hurt us too, so pretty soon we squirmed away from him. Then we said we would go over to my home for a little while and tell my sisters, Mary in particular, that I was staying with Cam that night. As we came up, we could see inside our house through the front window. My little gray, shrivelled father, who was making strenuous efforts to attain sobriety, was reading by candle light from a big green-covered book of Irish Orations. He would read a line or two, walk up and down, and then read a couple of lines more. This was his only form of amusement outside of working, drinking and chasing his children. As a consequence he could repeat you from memory " Abhor the Sword " or extracts from Daniel O'Connell or Emmet or Burke for as long a time as you had strength to listen. There he was, his little bullet head stooped over, wearing huge horn-rimmed spectacles and anon turning a page with his gnarled and crabbed fingers. That hurt me, too, a lump caught in my throat. Cam understood; he patted my back. " All right, Mart, he's a nice little feller after all, ain't he? But we got to go."

We entered the house somewhat awkwardly and I told my sister Mary, who is now long since dead of that terrible hacking cough which constantly shook her, that I would spend the night with Cam and that next day I would go fishing. She with one swift glance knew I was lying but she let it go; probably my lie would prove harmless.

" An' have a good time, Mart," she called to me as I closed the kitchen door. That was too much;

I ran away into the darkness, Cam following, and I realized what I now so clearly see, that she was a noble, sweet, generous girl.

I went home with Cam. Sarah Clarke and Bradford were talking on the front porch. They told us they were planning to take us up Steptoe Butte the next Sunday, then we sneaked off to bed, feeling mean about that. Cam said he wished people "wouldn't be so darned obligin'," and I wished so too. There were so many things that made you feel mean, so very many.

We went to bed but we did not sleep much. First we tossed and squirmed and kicked around for an hour, then we sat up with blankets around us and talked. We counted our money. It totaled a dollar and ninety cents; ninety cents of Cam's and a dollar of my own, which I got for three muskrat skins. That seemed plenty to start life with. Then we told each other over and over again our plans for life. Our idea was not to get married but to be partners always, in which case a man would not need a wife. When we owned a railroad and could be engineer whenever we felt like it, we thought we would try the cattle business and have a Chinese cook and two "nigger" cow-boys. Cam also wanted to write some books on history and, though I did not care much about that, I said I would stay with him "till his eyes turned yellow," however long that may be.

We dressed, sneaked out and took another look around town and finally sat down on the steps of Mr. McPetherick's rickety Tennessee Restaurant and Hotel, the windows of which were as black as a polled-angus cow. Outside, however, it was bright

moonlight; the bunch grass shone with a wonderful wimpling luster, frogs croaked in Day's big spring and coyotes probably howled dismally on the very distant hill tops, but we could not hear them, which shows what a city Washtucna had become. We kept very quiet, not desiring to bother people, and, besides, we did not feel like talking. " Bimeby " we heard horse hoofs hammering their way down the road towards us and pretty soon Mr. Bob Dalton jerked up his frozen eared cayuse at the door of Jan Havland's saloon, which still was lighted. He swung off and left Monté standing, and Monté waited patiently, as he was trained to do, without hitching. Then we heard Bob's Mexican spurs rattle on the floor as he walked into the bar room.

" Do you reckon, Cam," I asked, " that they have as interesting and noble sights and sounds and happenin's in Spokane and such places as they do here? Do you reckon there are many sports like Bob and Monté? "

Cam waited a long while and then said, " Let's go to bed." I think he doubted it himself.

But sleeping was not very good even then. It was frightfully still. We heard Bob Dalton gallop towards home, heard Doc Punts deliver himself of a heroic yawn on the steps of Jan Havland's, and then just frogs and singing insects and roosters.

" Punts is goin' to bed," said Cam. Then we snuggled up because we were cold. Sarah Clarke had been wakened. She came in and we pretended to be asleep while she kissed us. It never occurred to us that she would really miss Cam if he left. We thought we had that question answered correctly,

and yet she seemed fond of him and stroked his hair in what she supposed to be his sleep.

Afterwards, when it seemed to me I had snoozed just a minute, Cam pulled my arm and in the same moment the sun poured the room clear, running-over full of the loveliest pale gold. Cam jumped up and whispered that we must be off. We dressed hastily, putting our little parcels of baggage in our various pockets, and then we came quietly out upon the dew-wet grass.

When we had gone away a few yards, Cam turned back. I waited. "She's asleep," he said, returning hastily. "I just went in to see. She's been a big help to me all right."

There was no one yet astir on Washtucna's little street. We hurried along to the Beauclerc house, a mile away on the hill, and stealthily approached the back of it. Yes, there it was from an upstairs window. Cam pulled the long piece of string and little Julie plumped her witchingly pretty small face over the window sill. She made a gesture to be silent, which we did not much need, for we could hear people moving in the kitchen, and later we heard a man feeding the horses in the barn. We hid in the gooseberry patch and presently little Julie met us there. She was frightened but her eyes sparkled and she brought us two apples and two tarts, which we took vowing never to eat as they were too good. This promise we were not able to keep for more than a mile of walking; we were hungry.

Cam and Julie, as I remember it, were not able to do very much talking. They were too embarrassed. I attributed it to my presence and tried to minimize

the handicap by looking for birds' nests in the gooseberries. But it was not any use. Cam suddenly said, "Good-bye, Julie!" Julie grabbed him and kissed him with tears streaming down her face and then she turned and ran and Cam and I also ran, saying nothing whatever to each other for a long time, not, indeed, until we were out upon the white, dusty stage road.

We at once took the road in the Spokane direction and trudged along together through the lovely morning, not saying much because our minds were both looking over their shoulders instead of ahead. But we cheered up as we approached Tom Warren's and breakfast. A person's emotions mostly run to the low end of the scale when he is hungry, at least they do until he smells good food or approaches it.

We came to Tom's at a lucky time. The old man was just frying bacon and eggs and when we said, "Hello, Mr. Warren!" right at his elbow, he jumped and said gruffly, before he looked, that he wished "to hell" strangers would have the manners to knock at the door instead of "scaring people up" that way; but, when he regained composure, he said that he was much obliged for the company. When we told him we had walked clear out there, of course he was surprised, because he had been riding horseback for so long that he hardly knew walking could be done any more. He had believed it, I suppose, to be a lost art, like hanging by your tail or knitting with your toes.

He put on a lot more food, delighted, as he had truly said, to have company, but nevertheless from force of habit he growled about the trouble. But

when he saw we were too young to understand that growling was done merely on principle, he cheered up and told us more stories about sea-going; ones this time about Chinese pirates that made you shiver. And by that time breakfast was ready and how we did eat! I suppose Mr. Tom Warren had conversationally killed ten thousand pirates that morning before we left. That was hospitality for you.

After breakfast, to deceive poor old Tom, we turned down to go fishing in Pine Creek, but when we were out of his sight we again turned up the Spokane stage road and walked mile after mile.

One of the disadvantages of walking is that after a while you get tired. I noticed this very soon and I called Cam's attention to it and warned him that if I had known that beforehand I would not have come so far. He said neither would he and we wondered why we had not run away close to home. But for boys we were pretty hard and we kept on, sweating and talking and resting and trying very resolutely not to look back over our shoulders to where Washtucna lay.

By noon we were at Olalla, which was thirteen miles from Washtucna, and we had a fine respectful feeling for the total distance of forty-six miles which we had undertaken to walk. Olalla was in those latter days so great a rival of Washtucna's that *The Washtucna Sun* and *The Breeze* had once for a week declared a truce and had united their forces in the labour of piling obloquy on the head of Olalla. As a result we had rather an erroneous impression of Olalla. We fancied it would be about a cross between a cesspool and a penitentiary and that its in-

habitants would be half Chinese, half dog. We found that it was actually much like Washtucna. This was disappointing, as disappointing as finding that other people are about as intelligent and virtuous as you yourself are. But it is one of the sterling virtues of the human mind that such self-stultifying impressions are usually kept out by the armour self-conceit.

We had dinner at the Olalla Hotel. We enjoyed it, but the price we paid injured our finances. That dollar and ninety cents looked as small as the forty-six miles now looked large. But we had eaten our money's worth, I can see that very clearly as I look back, no matter what we paid. My, how we ate! Our idea, I believe, was to eat so much that we would not want supper.

After dinner we were happy and, as dinner had made us feel sleepy, we took a cursory look at Olalla and then went out along the stage road and went to sleep in the shade. We did not wake up for two hours, and when we did, we went swimming. That refreshed us but it took time and as we afterwards walked along we exerted our brains a little and decided that it would be impracticable to go to Spokane that day, as there were still thirty miles to do. This was not in accordance with plans but there was no escaping the conclusion.

Along about sunset and supper time we came to Mr. Ike McMickin's ranch. There were flowers growing around the door and Cam said it was his opinion, as a human-nature expert, that people would get well treated by people who had flowers. Good treatment was what I wanted for I was as hol-

low as a drum with hunger, in spite of all I had eaten at lunch, and I was pretty tired; so I led the way in to the door.

Old Mr. McMickin and his wife were sitting in a spotless, cosy kitchen waiting for tea to boil. Cam put out his chest, swelled his biceps and said he and I wanted to work for food and bed. I presume we did not look like heavy workers, anyway the old people laughed. We were indignant and, in spite of being tired, we were about to leave, but the old man, who was very kind, threw his long Scotch arms around us both and set us down by force at a table before food; not, however, that he needed to show extreme violence. In two minutes we were eating and old Mrs. McMickin was plying us with food, with questions and with gossip. I believe we fell asleep at table; at any rate I don't remember much until morning.

These two old people treated us well. Cam did all the lying and he did it so perfectly that Mrs. McMickin wept when he recounted how we were homeless orphans from Walla Walla who were going to Spokane to live with a relative. They wanted to adopt us themselves but we nobly put them away. No, we would go on. So the old lady gave us a lunch to put in our pockets and Mr. McMickin took us five miles on the road in a buckboard. As we left, Mrs. McMickin was clucking like an old hen. It was all very pleasing to us but we were far too much grown up to show it. We acted as though we were used to it. There is nothing like being men of the world.

That was a long day of walking. We omitted

sleeping in the shade, swimming and such restful diversions and just walked and walked. We got blisters, we became so tired that we wobbled, but we kept on; and we went so well that at about six we were on the edge of Spokane. But Spokane's edges were long and it took nearly all our strength to finish.

Spokane was disconcerting. There were a great many more people there than we had expected, many more horses and fewer tents than I remembered. The place had grown immensely in two years. We had expected to meet Mr. Hirschlager on some street corner or to go straight to his house; but both he and his house seemed elusive. There were too many houses around and too many people on the corners. How could the place have so grown? You could not locate anybody or anything. And actually there were street cars, and we did not understand street cars. Further, we could not wait, we were too hungry; so we spent all our remaining money for food.

The food gave us both strength and a little intelligence and we went after the house like the sleuths in detective stories and we found it. It was a big house with large grounds and with a lawn that I thought was like velvet. I was mistaken, but at least I had never seen such a lawn. As we approached, it was dark. We saw that the house was all lighted and we saw a large party of people in the dining-room. We lost courage at that and went out and sat on the fence and waited for the party to go. It was a long wait and sometimes we dozed. Suddenly Cam prodded me; he could always stay awake

better than I. Carriages were leaving. We watched them whirl away. It was like the best of your dreams, beautiful, entrancing, romantic. I was now glad I had left Washtucna. You never saw such things there. I decided I liked very well being a newsboy, and I wonderd if such boys had carriages too. But from whence came carriages and street cars? Who in Spokane was it that possessed Aladdin's lamp? They must have come by magic.

The Hirschlagers sat down by themselves on the veranda, their company all gone. We hurried towards them across the lawn and started up the steps.

"What do you boys want?" asked Mr. Hirschlager in rather harsh tones of our shadows. He did not recognise us yet. My heart swelled until it was as large as a watermelon. I could not speak. Suppose the man had forgotten us. But Cam could speak and he did.

He pulled off his hat and stepped forward smartly in all those wonderful surroundings and trappings of grandeur and said politely,

"How do you do, sir? I'm Cam Clarke and this is Mart Campin from Washtucna. We walked up from Washtucna to see you, sir, like you said to do when we needed a friend. We want to go railroadin', sir, and I hope it ain't too late at night; but we've been waiting."

And then from fright and embarrassment and natural stupidity I could not see anything, but it seemed to me that about a hundred women and men gathered Cam and me up together and hugged us, and the women kissed us and cried, and the men shouted and stamped their feet. And all those women and men

were just Mr. and Mrs. Hirschlager. They patted us and scolded us and gave us chairs and candies and cake and milk and, the next thing I knew, Cam and I were tumbling over each other to tell everything; and we all seemed to be crying. We told everything, threw all cargo overboard and felt better. We had not realized what a load we carried. Then they packed us off to bed in wonderful clean sheets, in a spacious, airy, white room next to a bathroom with lace curtains and towels in it. It all seemed to me too good to use.

The last thing I heard was that Mr. Hirschlager was sending a special engine with his car to Washtucna to get Sarah Clarke and Bradford. I wondered dimly why, but did not much care; I was too tired.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHY Mr. Hirschlager sent the special train for Mrs. Clarke and John Bradford instead of sending Cam and me to Washtucna I do not understand, unless he merely wanted to see Bradford and Sarah. Nor do I know the history of that special train after it left except that it went fast. I know it went fast, because Ben Whitten was engineer and he told me so himself, and Ben knows fast as well as any one. I may as well mention that this was in those good reliable days before there was any legal limit on the number of hours a man could drive engines without rest or any practical limit to his opportunities for killing people. Ben hurried because he had just returned on "number nine" from the Palouse branch and in Washtucna he had heard that Cam and I were missing. Now, like every one else who had ever visited Washtucna, he was anxious to do Sarah Clarke a service; this was his chance, so he hurried. It was he who would bring her first word of the run-aways, for at night, after the fashion of small towns, Washtucna received no telegrams. Likewise he hurried because he was tired on account of previous exertions covering a period of somewhat more than sixteen hours.

Poor Sarah Clarke was, of course, not asleep that night, a fact which Cam and I were utterly unable to

comprehend when we were informed of it later. Instead, she was wandering around her little house like the very shadow of woe. Nor was John Bradford asleep. He and Doc Punts were sitting in the latter's office smoking strong cigars and guessing where the "little devils" were. And I believe there was even some wakefulness in my own family that night. Consequently the train had but a small wait in Washtucna. In about fifteen minutes the engineer had notified my father that I was safe, had pumped his engine around the turntable, had gathered in Bradford, Sarah Clarke and also Punts, in the character of attending physician, had hooked on anew to the car and was off for Spokane with a very light-hearted party aboard. Ben told me afterwards that his speed on the return trip was "excussive." I believe him implicitly. It was not necessary, but the West believes things should be done smartly. His speed was undoubtedly "excussive," but no one seems to have been killed, which is enough.

The party arrived to Cam and me in our palatial bed-room with great shouting just as it was dim day. First were Sarah Clarke and John Bradford, then Doc Punts and the Hirschlagers. They all came in pell-mell and in an instant Sarah Clarke's arms were around Cam and she was sobbing "Oh-oh-oh-oh." Then we all shouted louder than ever to make each other believe that it was a very gay occasion, for Sarah Clarke's tears hurt us all more than sickness and surgery. We could not one of us remember that she had ever before cried in our presence like this, unreservedly and with heart and soul and body. We

had seen slow dropping tears before, but nothing like this.

Cam and I sat up and we all chattered until the red sun flung a quiver of light into the bed-room. Then Mrs. Hirschlager drove everybody to bed. "Nobody's had a wink but these fiendish boys, and they do not deserve sleep," she complained playfully. "But now we'll go get forty winks at least."

When it was quiet again in the bed-room, Cam said he thought we had the "wrong steer" on Sarah Clarke's not missing us. "I like railroadin' first rate, Mart," he said, "but I see I'll have to give it up; a feller has family duties, Mart. You see I gotta quit it."

I said, "Sure he has family duties," but I could not remember that I possessed any great quantity. That, though, was my mistake. Sister Mary must have mingled sobs that night with her hacking cough.

"But, gee, it's fine here! I like railroadin'," said I; "I hate to quit it. Do you s'pose newsboys allus sleep in places like this?" Cam was asleep before I finished.

That morning, at a late breakfast, which, somehow, was not so very gay, Punts, who had been holding entirely aloof from conversation, suddenly slammed his knife and fork on the table with violence and grated fiercely, "Ladies and gents, this trouble is all caused by paltry hesitations and waitings; such things always make trouble. Mrs. Clarke here and John Bradford are, I believe, legally contracted to marry each other — but they don't do it. Why not? How can young boys know what to do when grown folks ain't decided in their actions? Is there any

reason for this here tergiversatious and waiting conduct — no, sir! Mrs. Hirschlager, I vote that we marry off this here couple to-night, and right here in Spokane. I'm tired waiting. Ain't you?"

The Hirschlagers and Cam and I shouted and banged the table. Sarah Clarke and Bradford blushed and looked at their plates, but as the uproar continued they looked at each other questioningly. They had not thought of it before. "Well, why not?" said their glances.

"I am not dressed —" protested Mrs. Clarke mildly, with the true feminine instinct in such matters. And she cast her fine eyes over her skirt with gentle disapproval. She really was already nearly persuaded. Her words were but the echoes of a remark repeated by all the daughters of Eve for ten thousand generations.

"I'll fix you for a dress; you can wear my wedding dress," put in Mrs. Hirschlager, "it'll fit all right. It's been worn by my grandmother and my mother and me, it'll fit anybody."

"Anyhow, I'd have to go to Washtucna for things," Mrs. Clarke remonstrated. "I have nothing with me but what I wear at this moment."

"Another special train goes back to Washtucna to-day at noon for your special accommodation, unless I lose my job within the next two hours; and that'll surely get you back early for the wedding," said Mr. Hirschlager, studying his watch and closing it decisively. "I guess it's all right. You fix everything in the house, Fanny. I'll have the train ready. I'll get music and Boseman's will furnish the refreshments. I'll see to that, too."

"We'll want that special train to haul up some friends from Washtucna for us," said Punts firmly. "Washtucna has an official interest in this function. Washtucna won't stand to be ignored."

"We could put on a spare coach besides my car," cogitated Mr. Hirschlager aloud, his hands resting contemplatively on his well-rounded stomach. "We'll do that. You better wire Washtucna what is doing — right away, too."

"Let's do it, Sarah!" exclaimed Bradford, rising with vigour.

"All right, John," she said gently. "All right."

. . . . . .

The wedding was held at nine and, except the Hirschlagers and the parson, there was nobody present but Washtucna people. But Washtucna was there in force. In the centre of things were the solemn Beauclercs, the short-winded Rushers, Mr. Bob Dalton, shining like the sun and threatening to burst his new clothes around the biceps; Mr. Pete Barker, self-possessed and as graceful and elegant as a black panther; Doc Punts, giving all external evidence of being in a rage; silent, surly, manly Tom Warren; Jan Havland, John Donnelly; Mr. Skookum Jones, arrayed like the flowers and his hands trembling with palsy. Behind and about them were fifty more Washtucnans, my father amongst them; but not Miss May Caylor. That lady did not accept the general invitation, but she sent a letter.

The good wishes of the guests at that wedding were extraordinarily hearty, as was evinced by the vigour of the handshakes and kisses, the sharpness

and deepness of the cheers and the fervour with which they threw rice and shoes at the departing couple.

Cam was to go on the journey with the wedded pair. That was decided. But where would they go? when return?

There was a second carriage at the door for Cam and I jumped in with him and we got the overflow of rice and shoes.

"We're goin' to Vermont, Mart," he said, when we were on the way to the depot. "I just found out. We're goin' to Vermont. I wish I could go railroadin' with you, but you see how it is; a feller has his duties to do."

"Gee, I'll be lonesome," I said.

"You're to go right back to Hirschlager's in this carriage, Mart. He's goin' to see about you, he told me so himself. It's all fixed all right for you. You can go railroadin' if you like. Mr. Hirschlager really wants you to."

And then we were arrived at a noisy passenger station. People standing around were talking with easy familiarity of St. Paul and New York and Butte and then atop of that the overland express rolled in with a gale of wind on her flanks and a volcano of wrath and fire burning in her belly. I was bewildered. Cam shoved his new jack-knife into my hand, a parting present; Sarah Clarke kissed and hugged me; John Bradford gripped my shoulder until it hurt and slipped a banknote into my pocket; then they were gone. The train groaned and whined, there were shouts and mysterious wavings of lanterns — and I, alone on the broad platform,

was watching the last glimpses of three figures on the platform of the observation car.

Back at the Hirschlagers', when I arrived, there was gay music and they were dancing in good, generous Washtucna style, feet coming down flat and hard in a quadrille and Doc Punts vigorously calling the changes. "Balance all!" Little Skookum Jones, with admirable nimbleness, pranced before fat Mrs. Rusher, while my father, for extra measure, cast in some old-country jig steps for the edification and education of Mrs. Hirschlager, with whom he was dancing. Mr. Pete Barker, with pious demeanour, talked to Mrs. Beauclerc at the door of the conservatory, and Mr. Bob Dalton, all his clothes bulging out with muscles, patted juba by the fireplace and emitted the strange cries of a cow-puncher.

I tried to watch, but I could not stand it, so I fled to bed alone. I lay a long while just thinking and looking at the blackness. Then Mrs. Hirschlager stole softly in. I closed my eyes and feigned sleep. She kneeled down over me and kissed me just as Sarah Clarke had done; then she tip-toed out again.

So said I, "Cam is gone." And I heard the rails clatter under his train. He would be by now in the big Idaho woods. Were his and Sarah Clarke's wonderful mottled eyes filled with tears? How far was Vermont? would they ever come back? Lonesomeness was hard on a "feller."

And still the joyful music squeaked up from below and people's feet shuffled as though they were gay; but, oh, they could not have been.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE next morning, before breakfast, I took up relations with my father by the highly subtle artifice of saying "good morning" to him. The device worked and I felt as smart as Cam Clarke because it did. My father and I were both informal people and we really understood each other pretty well. The little man had been kept a guest in the house over night, and that morning he felt well physically and he was flattered by the Hirschlagers' acquaintance. Never had he expected to visit such people. Conseqeuntly, he was mild and cheerful and talkative, and he was willing to entirely ignore the whole transaction of my running away. Indeed, to people of his breed running away was a commonplace thing, as natural as falling in love or going swimming; a thing which you might discourage, but one which was sure to happen. He came down the broad stairs to breakfast perfectly self-possessed and humming a peasant song about some fairies who pushed a cartload of butter up a steep hill to help a man who was tired. And, as we went in together, he put his little knotted hand on my head and winked at me. Suddenly I liked him. There was something of the dignity of a savage in that little bent old man, and he had a sound sense of propriety and manners. Nothing could disturb or embarrass him or paralyze his self-respect.

The Hirschlagers liked my father. The breakfast conversation was lively, thanks to him; for, no matter how stupid things are, an Irishman can always rub the corners of his wits together and get a spark of merriment or tears. Of course the Hirschlagers could not well have helped seeing that my father had no sense, no more sense than a horse; and a horse, despite the phrase "horse sense," is only a fool with a good memory. Any dog is Isaac Newton alongside a horse. But that does not prevent your liking a horse. They thought my father delightful, and so he was; even as a parent he was delightful. He had led me, up till then, a very interesting life, thanks to his truly original conception of the relations which should exist between parent and child. I ought to be the last to deny his charm.

The conversation fell upon the question of my future. Mr. Hirschlager said that if I still wanted to go railroading he would help me to a job. I was in no doubt about it. I got a big lump in my throat as I thought of Cam and I said loudly and firmly that I had no desire whatever to go railroading. And so it was decided that I was to go home, whereupon my father fondly patted me on the back and winked. But I have not forgotten the kindness of that offer of Hirschlager's, nor the tear that Mrs. Hirschlager spilled when I left her. She is an old lady now. Last year I travelled from Philadelphia to Boston just to see her and say I remembered. I shall not forget that while I live. Such things are the breath of life.

My father and I went down to Washtucna on the forenoon train. I was glad to see the place, as I

felt that I had been away for months. I expected great changes and I had not been back five minutes when I felt it really was changed. It seemed fine, though, to see sister Mary again, who cried and laughed, while baby Maggie pulled my fingers and intimated that she, too, was glad I had come back. The others begged for adventures and I told them ours, whereupon they sniffed as though their adventures at home had been better; which now indicates to me that I was not very eloquent. I was not deceived, though, I felt still very important; but it was an empty sort of importance, for Cam was not there to help me think well of myself. I settled down, however, and took my place in the scheme of things and tried to be satisfied. I fought with Sandy Rusher and Sim Horlacker and used every method I knew to produce self-content, but it was no use; Washtucna was changed and I did not like the place any more.

Yes, Wushtucna really was changed. Other people felt it besides me. It was passing through a critical period. It was settling down. The froth and the ferment and the rainbows were dying; also some other things. Washtucna was about to become a farming village, whereas, before, it had been a frontier settlement. And there were people there who were not suited to live in a farming village. Some did not consciously see what was the matter, but they felt it and they chafed and fretted and said the town was dead. There had ceased to be extraordinary hopes and fears and hatreds abroad such as these frontier townsmen lived upon. Saints and Sinners had lost interest in strife and there was but little

talk of cattle and horse stealing. Indeed, people now kept stock fenced up, stealing was difficult. And everything began to be wheat — wheat, wheat, wheat — or hinged upon wheat. Wheat was the landscape and the hope and the fear of people. There were those who thought and dreamed and slept wheat. But Punts and Bob Dalton and Pete Barker were not of these and could not become of them. I heard them talking one morning in Punts' office, into which, in a spirit of scientific inquiry, I had poked my nose. They were all walking around, feverishly, as one might say, and they were talking of old times. They recalled enthusiastically memories of the hanging of Whitey McGrath and of the building of the Widow Clarke's house, and indicated a belief that such acts were highly virtuous and noble and heroic.

This reminded me that I must go to the post-office to see if there were a letter from Cam. He had promised to write but the promise was not thus far redeemed, and it was high time. I went out and this time I got the letter. I took it around the corner, beyond the new brick church, and read it. It went:

"*Dear Mart:*

"We are visiting with grandma Bradford here in Kingtown, Vermont. It is named that because once they asked the King of England to come here for a visit, but he didn't. That was several years ago and I ain't seen (grandma wants me to stop saying ain't, which is unreasoning, as Bob Dalton said it) anybody that actually saw it, so it ain't as good as Wash-

tucna which had the Governor stay over nite as you remember yourself. We're going to stay here for good, as the people that minded papa shooting Mr. McManus that time have got used to the idea including the sheriff. And now I think they're going to elect papa sheriff or governor or something like that and he'll be saif. It's a nice place in some ways but not like Washtucna. Nobody was ever linched here or shot, except McManus and nobody wears shaps. There is a boy here named Arthur Cameron, which is proved to be my cousin so we had a fight because a curlew has such a long bill. I told him about it and he said I lied. I licked and we're friends but not like you and me and he's fat and jolly. There ain't any coyotes but lots of skunks. We ain't ever coming to Washtucna except when I grow up and come to live there and be marshal so you tell Julie and Sandy. Papa thinks maybe next winter him and Sarah Clarke will come for a while to look after business but I can't as I'll be at a private school in Rutland. The teachers Art says don't chew tobacco like Jim Stilson and there ain't any Chinese laundry to tick-tack and I wish you was here. People ride trolley cars instead of horses.

" Yours truly,
" CAM."

They were not coming back. My internal feelings got twisted again and I walked along sort of dizzily until I came to Punts' office. Mr. Pete Barker, Mr. Bob Dalton and Doc Punts were standing around looking bored and gazing outdoors into the dazzling sunlight.

I swallowed a lump. "They ain't never comin' back," I said heavily, and I handed the letter to Punts and sat down desolately in his big leather chair. They all knew what it was and looked up. Punts read the letter aloud and they all laughed in places and spat and talked admiring profane language *sotto voce*. But when it was finished they were very solemn.

"It's whut I was expectin'," said Bob dejectedly. "The place ain't whut it was an' of course they'd be the first ones to see it; smart folks like them."

"It's a good place yet," said Punts firmly, "and growin', too. And I'm glad they let up on Bradford for pottin' that whatever-his-name-is feller. I bet he rated it all right."

"I guess I'll start for Alberta 'bout to-morrow," said Bob softly; "I guess I will. Judge Rusher's buyin' my place an' Monté is fat f'r him. Le's have a drink!"

In this ceremony they were joined by Mr. Skookum Jones, who, upon hearing the news, donned the most mournful appearance I have ever seen.

"I was hoping to see the lady again," he remarked with attempted briskness. "I'm gettin' old but I was hopin' she'd get back."

I never saw Bob Dalton but once again and that was when he and Monté went out of town like a sky-rocket, Bob yelling and his revolver cracking like Fourth-of-July. That was the last demonstration of this kind ever seen in Washtucna. And that was the last time Washtucna heard Bob Dalton's voice.

A short time later *The Breeze* and *The Sun* consolidated into one sheet, partizanship having fallen

to such low ebb that there was no point in separate publications. That first issue of *The Sun-Breeze* spread broadcast the news that "A. J. Punts, M.D., perhaps the most public-spirited man that Washtucna has hitherto given refuge to, is departing for the newer pastures of the Big Bend Country." He left in a blaze of glory, to the music of a band and amidst cheers. Two days later Mr. Pete Barker silently stole away — to Butte, people said.

Things were moving fast again. Men of this breed were now leaving Washtucna as fast as they once had come. "On to the next;" it was the dance of frontier life. And yet for one of these that left, seven of a different breed came in. Wheat, wheat, wheat: that was the fever. Day by day ploughshares turned under acre on acre of the rich soil, and lonely houses came over night into every sunburned valley.

At the top and crest of all, I one day saw Judge Rusher and Mr. Beauclerc walk down Steptoe Avenue together in friendly talk. Partizanship was, indeed, dead.

That was the day on which Ernst Glick, the old German from over beyond in Idaho, offered me a place with his flocks of sheep. This time there was no running away. My father looked up from his book of Irish eloquence and with feeling in his shrill voice told me I could go. "Perhaps you can do bether f'r y'rsilf than I can do f'r ye, me bhoy. I am an ign'rant man. I only ask ye to remember if I am not a sphlendid plant, that I grew in a bleak and ixposed locality — an' God bliss ye! When will ye sthart?"

And so he and my sister Mary rose to see me off at earliest day, she still as ever with her hacking cough. How sweet and gentle and beautiful she was that morning! She crammed a little sewing kit into my pocket, the buckboard rattled and then in the cold mist we climbed the hill adown which Cam Clarke had once come on the shining mare Nan. Below, all asleep in a light of radiant pink, was the upstart town Washtucna.

. . . . . .

And now, again, after many years, I have returned to live quietly in Washtucna. My wife that is, once was Julie Beauclerc. We have prospered and we have been happy. We have children. We count our sheep by thousands and they range on a hundred mountain sides.

And Cam — but all the world knows. Some people speak of him with awe and they wonder by how many points his death would shake the stock market; while others anathematize him as the source of every evil thing. I have seen him but once in all these years and that was in Washtucna. We sat in his private car. Judge Rusher came in, fat, florid and with palsy, and Mr. Beauclerc, withered, deaf and silent. Julie was there, too, and in the centre of all was Cam, red-haired, with wonderful, flashing, changing, mottled eyes. Mostly he was silent; but sometimes he burst forth with speech like flame, rapid, passionate, vehement, decisive, not a word wasted; then he would drop back again totally silent. It made me think of a machine gun.

Sarah Clarke and Bradford still are up in Vermont in the rock country. Like us in Washtucna, they

are quiet, old-fashioned, early-rising folks. But Cam is *sui generis*.. He has been like a sky-rocket. Hirschlager did but light the match. Cam scarcely came to railroading: some instinct seemed to have brought him to it. It was not by mistake that he ran away with me to be a " train butcher." Railroading was the thing in modern life that needed him and that he needed.

And so my book of Cam and me and Washtucna and all the rest ends. Gunnysack Charlie waits to take me in the morning on a buckboard over and beyond Craig Mountain. There still, you see, are roads and trails where the automobile dare not go. Gunnysack also is old — so shall we all be soon; oh, so very soon. And but yesterday Julie Beauclerc did trip the grass a child; and it seems but last night that I heard the birth cry of our first man child, Cameron Campin, who now outtops my height with his.

THE END

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